



# MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Master Plan for Mountain Biking in the Northern Territory is presented by Tourism NT in partnership with the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT. Tourism NT procured the services of consultants TRC Tourism, EarthCheck and ediacara to develop the Master Plan; organisations that have a proven record of successfully completing projects of a similar scope and scale. TRC Tourism, EarthCheck and ediacara have held a number of consultations with stakeholders throughout the NT and have gathered relevant information and insights into the activity of mountain biking in the region which has informed the content of this document.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Master Plan has been developed to guide investment in and development of sustainable world class mountain biking opportunities in the Northern Territory.

Mountain biking as a recreational activity and mountain biking tourism are growth areas in Australia and globally. With its iconic landscapes in the Red Centre and Top End and the growth of distinctive riding experiences at Alice Springs, the Northern Territory is poised to develop as a premier adventure mountain biking destination. Mountain biking is set to contribute to the NT's brand - 'Do the NT' - as a place for a fun, active and social place for unique, engaging experiences set against dramatic landscapes.

***The Northern Territory will be recognised worldwide as the place to be different and to do the unexpected – to experience the heart of Australia on its world class mountain bike trails.***



Our aspiration is for mountain biking to become an important recreational, social and economic resource for the Territory's communities by:

The NT will become a bicycle-friendly destination that welcomes mountain bike riders and provides experiences and services that equate with world's best practice.

The Master Plan was developed collaboratively by government agencies, land managers, the tourism industry and community groups. It sets out an integrated approach for developing mountain biking by public and private partners including the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT, Tourism NT, Regional Tourism Organisations, Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment, Landcare groups, mountain bike clubs and organisations, other Government agencies, Local Government, Emergency Services, relevant land holders and native title holders, the business community and corporate sector.

Mountain biking in the NT will be developed to appeal to a range of markets to maximise its appeal:

It will be promoted to these markets through 'hero experiences' which express the distinctive essence of riding in the Territory.



*Discover a world of **unrivalled scenery and endless skies** to be explored.*



*Adventure down ancient escarpments as part of an **adventure race like no other.***



*See why the world's best MTB brands use the NT to **see if they have what it takes.***



*Be transformed and inspired by the **stories of an ancient land** and the world's oldest living culture*

### **There will be a diversity of quality mountain biking opportunities in the NT**

- Alice Springs will be a leading world class hub for mountain biking with a range of trails, experiences and events suited to local, national and international markets.
- There will be a small number of Distinctive Rides that are suited to markets and offer experiences of the NT's iconic landscapes.
- There will be ongoing development of a high quality trail network for Darwin suited to local riders and visitors and with potential for expansion of the network and markets as demand increases.
- In other places there will be ongoing development of quality trails in committed local communities as resources permit to encourage local participation, employment and health benefits and offer opportunities for visitors.

The Master Plan provides five major strategies for achieving the vision for mountain biking in the NT.

## 1. Alice Springs – the NT’s Iconic MTB Hub

- Consolidate and improve the existing infrastructure
- Investigate new MTB opportunities to add to the diversity of the Alice Springs MTB experience
- Develop bicycle-friendly support services
- Develop quality information and interpretation suited to MTB markets
- Extend the Alice Springs MTB event offering

Alice Springs, which has already gained a reputation for its mountain biking, has significant potential to become a world class mountain biking destination including achievement of International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) Ride Centre status. Alice Springs will be developed to be the leading world class hub for NT mountain biking with a range of trails, experiences and events suited to local, national and international markets. Priority will be given to consolidation and improvement of the existing trail network in the Telegraph Station, West MacDonnell Ranges and the Westside and Eastside areas to build a world class network. This will also provide a strong basis for building supporting experiences and services that add to the appeal of mountain biking in Alice Springs. Once this has been achieved opportunities to further extend the extent, type and variety of trails in the network will be investigated and implemented.

## 2. Distinctive Rides

- Investigate development of a small number of distinctive, world class adventure rides in the NT’s iconic landscapes.

A small number of world class **Distinctive Rides** will be developed to showcase the NT’s iconic landscapes and attract a range of adventure markets. Such rides will be remote yet accessible experiences suited to a range of adventure markets and will be supported by services such as transport, accommodation and tours.

Potential locations of these rides will be investigated – including the West or East MacDonnell Ranges, Litchfield National Park, Nitmiluk National Park and Kakadu. The feasibility of developing one of these rides as an IMBA-designated Epic Ride will also be investigated. Epic Rides (demanding rides of at least 32km in a natural setting) are a ‘must do’ attraction for mountain bikers.

## 3. Other NT MTB Destinations

- Develop Darwin as a supporting MTB hub for hard core, enthusiast, leisure and local markets.
- Investigate the development of Kakadu National Park as an adventure ride destination
- Consolidate existing mountain biking trails in Katherine and investigate development of the Katherine area as a supporting MTB hub taking advantage of its proximity to the significant visitor destination of Nitmiluk National Park.
- Investigate the feasibility of developing local MTB trails in a range of NT towns and visitor destinations.

In **Darwin**, there will be ongoing development of a high quality mountain bike trail network suited to local riders and visitors, with potential for expansion as demand increases. In **other places** there will be ongoing development of quality trails in committed local communities as resources permit to encourage local participation, employment and health benefits and offer opportunities for visitors.

#### 4. Positioning & Marketing

- Ensure the *Ride the Red Centre* marketing campaign effectively promotes the improved and new mountain biking opportunities in Alice Springs and Central Australia to the range of markets.
- Improve the focus on mountain biking opportunities as part of the NT's brand and visitor marketing activities.
- Better integrate the mountain biking hero experiences within trip planning information.

Effective **positioning and promotion** of the distinctive features of mountain biking in the NT will be central to encouraging mountain biking visitors – whether they be leisure visitors who may be attracted to mountain biking, enthusiasts seeking a special ride, or hard core and sport mountain bikers seeking challenge and competitions. Adventure mountain biking in the NT will be promoted through a range of channels to reach markets – including websites and social media.

#### 5. Enablers – Making it Happen

- Develop mountain biking governance and trail management arrangements to guide implementation of the Master Plan and sustainable development and management of each trail network.
- Facilitate implementation of the Master Plan through improved funding and resources.
- Improve the quality of MTB trail design, management and maintenance throughout the NT consistent with best practice standards.
- Encourage development of bicycle-friendly services throughout the NT.

It is estimated that the current value of mountain biking tourism in the NT is worth around \$45.3M. If the NT further develops its mountain biking product to lift its market profile and increase NT's mountain biking visitation to the national average of 7% per annum, there is potential for mountain biking visitation to contribute expenditure of approximately \$66.8 million by 2020.<sup>1</sup>

Implementation of the Master Plan also has potential for employment and new business enterprises for Aboriginal communities through track construction and maintenance work as well as tourism business associated with trail experiences. Aboriginal people may also be encouraged to participate in mountain bike riding through programs (including provision of bikes) in schools and communities.

The establishment of new mountain biking events also has the potential to create business opportunities for local communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Future economic impact includes Australian visitor and spend forecasts by the Tourism Forecasting Committee (2015 publication).





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## ABBREVIATIONS

ASTC	Alice Springs Town Council	MTBA	Mountain Bike Australia
ASTSHR	Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historical Reserve	MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
CARR	Central Australian Rough Riders	NT	Northern Territory
CBD	Central Business District	NTG	Northern Territory Government
DCM	Department of Chief Minister	PWCNT	Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT
DLP	Department of Lands and Planning	RTO	Regional Tourism Organisation
DORC	Darwin Off Road Cyclists	TCA	Tourism Central Australia
IMBA	International Mountain Bike Association	TNT	Tourism NT
MTB	Mountain Bike or Mountain Biking	TTE	Tourism Top End

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

Mountain biking is an increasingly popular recreational activity and visitor attraction that is providing local recreational opportunities and contributing to tourism, social and economic growth in many places throughout the world.

In the Northern Territory (NT) mountain biking is growing. Several places have enthusiastic mountain bikers who are active in development of biking opportunities, associations and events at the local level. Alice Springs has seen most mountain biking growth in the NT and its single-track trails are considered by enthusiasts to be among the best in the world, with the added feature of cycling in a unique scenic desert environment. Two nationally recognised mountain biking events are held in Alice Springs and the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT (PWCNT) has recently invested in development of a designated mountain biking trail network in the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historic Reserve, and the West MacDonnell Ranges National Park.

This Master Plan is intended to provide an integrated and realistic approach for government agencies and other stakeholders to invest in and develop mountain biking opportunities in the NT in a way that attracts mountain biking visitors and provides meaningful recreational, social and economic benefits to local communities, including the Territory's Indigenous people. While the Master Plan addresses development of NT mountain biking generally, a major focus is development of Alice Springs and Central Australia as a mountain biking destination with international standing, potentially achieving gold International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) Ride Centre status for Alice Springs.

There are also several current or scheduled land use planning processes which may have implications for mountain biking development in the NT.

## 1.2 HOW THE MASTER PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The Master Plan was developed in close consultation with NT agencies, land managers, the tourism industry, the mountain biking community and other stakeholders.

A Strategic Directions Discussion Paper was circulated to key stakeholders to obtain their input on key directions and opportunities for mountain biking in the NT. A draft Master Plan was then prepared and circulated to stakeholders for comment. Further consultation was then held with stakeholders before completion of the final Master Plan.

## 1.3 WHAT IS MOUNTAIN BIKING?

Mountain biking (MTB) involves riding a purpose-built mountain bike on specially-constructed mountain bike trails (often in bike parks or trail networks) or on other off-road trails such as fire-trails and shared use path networks. A MTB ride or experience can involve any or all of these.

Mountain bike parks and trail networks often contain a range of trails for different riding types – such as trails suitable for different standards of cross country, downhill and all-mountain riding. All types of mountain biking have developed competitive events at the local, regional, national and international levels.

Mountain biking clubs and organisations have been developed at the local, national and international levels and assist in developing and running mountain biking trails and events, arranging for member insurance and representing mountain biking interests. The US-based International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) takes a leading role in setting standards for trails and experiences through its trail design and construction guidelines and accreditation schemes. In Australia the peak mountain biking advocacy group is Mountain Bike Australia, which is affiliated with IMBA.

## 1.4 WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL MTB DESTINATION?

This Master Plan takes a holistic, experience-based approach to the development of mountain biking in the NT, recognising that a number of factors are involved in developing a successful mountain biking destination. It is the combination of these factors that create a destination that is appealing for a range of mountain biking visitors and local users. Based on the characteristics of successful mountain biking destinations (such as Whistler and other mountain biking networks in British Columbia, Canada; Fruita, Colorado; 7Stanes in Scotland; and Rotorua, New Zealand) these factors relate to:

- the trail infrastructure, design, support facilities and management
- the wider tourism/visitor experience offered, both on and off trail
- the needs and preferences of a destination's mountain biking markets.

The key attraction for the range of mountain bikers is the trail network - the quality and quantity of trails, accessibility and the challenges and interest provided.

**Essential features** of a world class mountain biking network are:

- a high quality, sustainable trail network with good signage and mapping enabling users to navigate the network easily
- diversity of trail types and styles for users of all abilities, featuring a broad range of difficulty levels with good opportunities for rider challenge and progression. A typical split across a network is 20% beginner, 50% intermediate and 30% advanced level trails
- sufficient riding opportunities to fill 2 to 3 days - around 60km to 100km of trails
- a trail network that evolves over time to entice return visits
- accessibility from population or tourism centres and transport hubs
- high quality pre-trip information
- sustainable management of trails and infrastructure supported by a MTB-friendly local community.

Other features which add value but are not essential are:

- IMBA recognition which enhances the reputation of a mountain biking area through IMBA's global network. There are two formal mechanisms for IMBA recognition. IMBA Ride Centres are recognised by IMBA under a three tier scheme for the outstanding range, variety and quality of the riding experience. IMBA Epic Rides are demanding rides of at least 32km in a natural setting
- provision of transport such as shuttle vehicles, chair lifts
- high standard trailhead or nearby facilities
- events which attract participants and spectators.

### WHAT MOUNTAIN BIKERS WANT

According to the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA), mountain bikers want experiences that provide:

- connection with nature
- escape from society
- fun and the opportunity to feel the flow of a trail
- challenge that tests the rider's technical skill
- exercise that strengthens the body and mind
- variety of trails that have their own distinctive personalities
- connections to other trails and routes that create a range of possibilities
- camaraderie between friends and new acquaintances
- a sense of belonging from trails that welcome mountain bikers
- facilities that provide convenience and make the rider's experience complete.

### IMBA MOUNTAIN BIKE-FRIENDLY HOTEL GUIDELINES

- Safe storage for bikes & equipment
- Knowledgeable staff
- Bike workshop area
- Access to meals and energy foods
- Bike washing facility
- Area and trail maps
- Laundry for sports and technical gear
- Information on medical assistance and physical therapy
- Information on bike shops and repair
- Access to work-out and massage facilities

The off-trail experience will also be important to mountain bikers who spend a proportion of their time at a destination doing other activities. Important considerations are:

- an attractive landscape, natural beauty and cultural attractions
- a range of bike-friendly accommodation options
- cafes, food, beverage and retail businesses
- supporting bike-related services
- quality commercial tours (guided and self-guided)
- community engagement and support
- strong positioning as a mountain bike destination to attract a range of mountain biking visitors. Positioning as a distinctive mountain biking experience is important to distinguish a destination from its competitors and make it 'front of mind' among potential visitors
- coordinated destination marketing and promotion
- a range of attractions and things to do for non-riders or visitors who engage in mountain biking as part of a wider experience.

There are fewer requirements to developing quality mountain biking opportunities for local markets and a limited range of visitors. For local mountain biking networks the following factors are critical:

- a quality, sustainable trail network and associated infrastructure suited to users
- a diversity of trail types, styles and difficulty levels depending on the suitability of the local terrain, with opportunities for challenge and progression
- accessibility from population centres
- sustainable management and support from MTB organisations and the local community
- trail information, maps and apps
- activities and events for riders.

A quality local mountain biking network may have the potential to extend its market appeal over time if the trail network is able to be extended and there is potential for events, bike-friendly services and links to wider tourism experiences.

### CASE STUDY – MTB SERVICES: BAROSSA VISITOR CENTRE BIKE HUB

In 2015 the Barossa Cycle Hub was opened in Tanunda – a small town in the Barossa Valley located approximately 70km north-east of Adelaide. Costing an estimated \$460,000 to build, the project was co-funded by Barossa Council and the Australian Government through the Tourism Industry Regional Development Fund Grants Program.

The Barossa Cycle Hub is a one-stop shop for cyclists and includes amenities such as toilets, showers, change rooms, a bike maintenance station, an interpretive map, lockers, and a vending machine with purchasable bike accessories. The aim of the Hub is to boost the region's growing appeal to cyclists through facilities and services that can be accessed outside traditional retail hours.

This is the first dedicated cycle tourism facility in regional South Australia and it is intended to become a focal meeting point for cyclists – one which complements the region's 40kms of cycling and walking paths and provides direct access to food, wine, retail and other tourist activities.

***'The aim [of the Hub] is to capitalise on our existing food and wine reputation by adding cycle tourism to the mix.'***

**Mayor Brian Hurn**

## 2. CURRENT SITUATION

### 2.1 TRAIL NETWORKS AND DEVELOPMENT

Mountain biking has seen substantial recent growth in the NT in recent years and there are trail networks (formal and informal) in Alice Springs, Darwin and several other places. Two mountain biking clubs - the Darwin Off-Road Cyclists (DORC) and the Central Australian Rough Riders (CARR) - organise club events and social activities which are also open to visitors to the Territory. The biennial Masters Games in Alice Springs also feature mountain bike riding.

There is increasing community advocacy for mountain biking opportunities in the NT. Pedals NT, a new peak body for cycling interests in the NT, includes DORC as one of its foundation members.

Alice Springs has been the focus of mountain biking development and tourism in the Territory. Alice Springs is considered by mountain bikers to have world-class single-track trails. In addition to regular club events, Alice Springs has hosted high profile, nationally-recognised mountain bike endurance events for over ten years - *Lasseter's Easter in the Alice Mountain Bike Muster (Easter in the Alice)* and the *Redback MTB Enduro* in August. These events are both part of the national series - the former event is popular with local riders and families as well as visitors and the latter event is aimed more at professional riders.

Since 2012 Tourism Northern Territory (Tourism NT), the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT (PWCNT) and local stakeholders have sought to raise the profile of Alice Springs as a world class mountain biking destination through infrastructure development and marketing. In 2014, the PWCNT developed and opened four designated mountain biking trails over a length of approximately 27km in the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Historic Reserve (ASTSHR). Linked to this network will be approximately 30km of additional trails in the West MacDonnell National Park and adjacent Crown Land, linking to the Alice Springs Desert Park planned to be open in 2016.

Darwin has a number of trail networks including authorized trails in Charles Darwin National Park and informal networks on several areas of public and freehold land, some of which may shortly be developed and no longer available for mountain bike riding. There are small informal mountain biking trails developed by locals in several other towns.

A significant consideration for mountain biking development throughout the NT is that most existing mountain biking trails are unofficial trails that have been developed without landowner consent. Most of the popular trails in and around Alice Springs and Darwin were developed on Crown Land or unused private property without formal agreements with the relevant land managers. This has resulted in a lack of official or sanctioned trails and formal management and maintenance arrangements. It also has implications for risk management, user safety, sustainable management and future land use planning.

Formalisation of mountain biking trails and management arrangements has begun to be addressed. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been concluded between the PWCNT and the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment to manage organised mountain biking activity on Crown Land in and around Alice Springs and discussions are continuing on a MOU between DORC and PWCNT for mountain biking in Charles Darwin National Park in Darwin.

A summary of the NT's existing mountain biking networks is provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Existing Mountain Biking Locations in the NT**

LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
<b>Alice Springs</b>	
<b>Telegraph Station</b>	Positioned as the ‘Gateway’ experience to MTB riding in the Alice Springs region, with relatively gentle to moderate cross country trail riding through scenic terrain. There are approximately 27km of trails.
<b>West MacDonnell Ranges and Westside Trails</b>	A mix of cross country and all-mountain trail experiences within interesting terrain featuring many excellent vantage points and covering about 30km. The trails are not currently formalised. The recently reconstructed West MacDonnell trail is in excellent condition, and other trails are in good to poor condition. The trails are suited to enthusiast and hardcore riders ( <i>see section 3.2 for description of MTB rider segments</i> ).
<b>Eastside Trails</b>	Cross country and all-mountain trail experiences offering spectacular panoramic views from ridge-top trails and covering at least 30km. The trails are not currently formalised. Trail condition varies from excellent to poor. There are good (although informal) trail links to the Telegraph Station for extended rides, and informal trail links to Emily and Jessie Gaps. The trails are suited to the enthusiast and hard-core segments.
<b>Other Central Australia</b>	
<b>Uluru – Kata Tjuta</b>	There is an existing trail ride of about 15km around Uluru which appeals to the leisure segment and provides complementary experiences for enthusiast and hardcore segments visiting this world tourism icon.
<b>Darwin and Top End</b>	
<b>Charles Darwin National Park</b>	This is the main mountain biking destination for Darwin, located about 7km from the Darwin CBD. It provides a high-quality, although small, cross country trail network of about 10km. It is the venue for local competitive and recreational MTB events. There are informal trails on adjacent land that have been identified by DORC for lease. The trails are maintained by DORC and PWCNT.
<b>Hidden Valley</b>	Adjacent to Charles Darwin National Park, Hidden Valley features a network of informal cross country trails (about 10km) in good to poor condition and linking to the national park. A master plan is due to be completed for this site to provide for a range of sporting and recreational activities potentially including mountain biking
<b>Casuarina Coastal Reserve</b>	This is an existing informal trail network providing cross country and all-mountain riding for the local Darwin community.
<b>Howard Springs</b>	An informal trail network at the Pine Forest offers excellent riding for different skills levels including beginners. The land is currently subject to planning review and the future use for riding is not assured.
<b>Hayes Creek</b>	Privately developed small network of trails that are suited to beginners (150km from Darwin).
<b>Litchfield National Park</b>	Use of service tracks and old four wheel drive tracks for mountain biking, including for weekend events. No formal mountain biking trails established. The Park’s rugged landscape and surfaces with little or no sand make it attractive for mountain biking. MTB experiences are included in the Park’s Draft Management Plan.
<b>Humpty Doo</b>	Local informal trails developed by residents.
<b>Kakadu</b>	Touring on mountain bikes occurs on some unsealed road and management trails.
<b>Katherine</b>	Local informal trails developed by residents. The Nitmiluk Plan of Management provides for consideration of MTB experiences.
<b>Tennant Creek</b>	Limited informal trails.
<b>Tiwi Islands</b>	No formal MTB trail offering.
<b>Nhulunbuy</b>	No formal MTB trail offering.

## 2.2 EXISTING MARKETING AND POSITIONING

To date the marketing and promotion of the NT as mountain biking destination has been undertaken to a level that is consistent with the network available for riding. It has included development of a brochure; support to local riders attending national events; and support of visiting mountain biking opinion leaders and journalists. Engagement with the tourism trade, media and partners has been largely led by Tourism NT working with regional tourism organisations.

Interstate MTB marketing is led by Tourism NT as part of the NT's consumer brand '*Do the NT*', launched in 2013. This brand positions the NT as a fun, active and social place for unique, engaging experiences set against dramatic landscapes. The brand is aimed at breaking down perceived price and accessibility barriers to booking a holiday to the NT and assisting to attract more domestic visitors as outlined in the *Tourism Vision 2020: Northern Territory's Strategy for Growth*.

Mountain biking has been promoted at an NT-wide level in '*Do the NT*' campaigns, which have included a series of TV commercial and print and digital advertisements. In May 2014 a 12-month '*Ride the Red Centre*' marketing campaign was launched by the NT Government following the opening of the new trail network at the ASTSHR<sup>2</sup>. The \$50,000 campaign was intended to promote Alice Springs as a leading mountain bike destination both within Australia and internationally. The campaign involved print and digital advertising and marketing support for local MTB groups to help promote the region at events around Australia. It also targeted leading MTB brands to promote Alice Springs as a place to hold product launches and testing.

Generally, mountain biking marketing messages and collateral has been included as part of mainstream NT marketing channels including websites, brochures, and family itineraries. A dedicated mountain bike trail map and booklet has been prepared for Alice Springs and Tourism NT has commissioned promotional videos and sponsored mountain bike journalist visits. Most of this collateral lacks unified messaging and branding (see review in Appendix A). To build the destination in the future, marketing and promotion will require a more innovative, engaging and unified approach to appeal to target mountain biking markets. It should also support operators that are already well-established and working with riders.

*The Northern Territory is not a place you just go to. The Northern Territory is a place you DO... And what you do is unlike anything else.*

## 2.3 THE NT'S POTENTIAL AS A MOUNTAIN BIKING DESTINATION

An assessment of the NT's mountain biking offering against the features of successful mountain biking destinations shows that the NT faces a range of challenges if it is to gain greater recognition and achieve the standards expected of world class mountain biking experiences (see assessment in Appendix B).

As the location which currently provides or partially provides most of these features, Alice Springs is in the strongest position to achieve world class mountain biking status (see Table 2) and to work towards IMBA Ride Centre accreditation (see Appendix C). This will require a coordinated effort to consolidate and improve the trail network and the range of mountain biking experiences, develop supporting services and promote Alice Springs mountain biking effectively to markets.

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<sup>2</sup> Media Release, NT Government – Media Release, *Ride the Red Centre* (19 May 2014)

**Table 2: Current Performance of the NT's Mountain Biking Locations**

FEATURES	DARWIN	KATHERINE	OTHER TOP END	ALICE SPRINGS	ULURU-KATA TJUTA	OTHER RED CENTRE
Sustainable trail network	P			✓		
Diversity of trails				P		
60-80km of trail				P		
Reason to return				P		
Accessible to tourism hub	P		✓	✓		
Quality pre-trip information				P		
Sustainable management	✓			✓		
Unique landscape	P		✓	✓	✓	✓
Bike-friendly accommodation				✓	P	
Supporting services	✓			✓	P	
Commercial operators		✓		✓	✓	
Clear MTB positioning	P		✓	✓	✓	
Active marketing				P	P	
Other attractions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

**Legend**

✓ = delivering on this now P = partially delivered now

*Other Top End* = Kakadu, Litchfield, Tiwi Islands and Nhulunbuy

*Other Red Centre* = East & West MacDonnell Ranges, Glen Helen, Watarrka - Kings Canyon, pastoral stations

With further development of trails and experiences, the NT generally has potential to provide quality mountain biking for the main mountain biking market segments:

The preferences of each segment and the current and potential opportunities in the NT for each market segment are examined in Table 3.



**Table 3: NT MTB Opportunities by Market Segment**

MTB MARKET SEGMENT	DESCRIPTION	OPPORTUNITIES/ GAPS IN THE NT
<p><b>Family / Leisure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The largest segment of off-road cyclists nationally.</li> <li>• They tend not to choose a destination because of its trails - they choose to ride in a destination they are visiting if it has trails.</li> <li>• The NT already attracts a large segment of this market, including travelling nomads and families touring Australia.</li> <li>• Includes people who may be attracted to a quality MTB experience offering even if they have little MTB experience.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Competitive Advantage - Variety</b></p> <p>Potential to provide a variety of accessible trails to suit all skill levels.</p> <p>This market will grow naturally through the marketing and development of MTB opportunities.</p> <p><b>Gaps</b></p> <p>Skills park, linkages of some trails to central locations and visitor hubs.</p>
<p><b>Enthusiasts / Trail Riders</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The most lucrative segment due to its size and average spend.</li> <li>• A high level of riders with professional background and high disposable income.</li> <li>• A wide variety of skill and experience levels.</li> <li>• Typically do not participate in events, but do engage in a wide range of other adventure and outdoor activities (such as trail running, hiking).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Competitive Advantage – Accessible New Frontier</b></p> <p>A wide range of trail lengths and difficulty in a totally different landscape (desert and tropical savannah compared with forest and alpine/subalpine landscapes elsewhere in Australia).</p> <p>Primary growth market with a need for targeted marketing.</p> <p><b>Gaps</b></p> <p>Diversity of marked trails, elevation, iconic trails.</p>
<p><b>Hard-core / Downhill / Sports</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small segment of the market, but high spenders during events.</li> <li>• Typically members of clubs who ride more than once a week.</li> <li>• Participate in events.</li> <li>• Part of a niche group that shares stories of the best MTB locations.</li> <li>• They will travel great distances to ride a trail or attend an event.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Competitive Advantage – Skills &amp; Thrills</b></p> <p>Highly technical trails in a spectacular setting and some extremely challenging rides and events.</p> <p>Continue to grow through events and word of mouth.</p> <p><b>Gaps</b></p> <p>A signature trail (with a name), an iconic event.</p>
<p><b>Local Riders</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A varied group likely to cover the range of segments.</li> <li>• May be members of MTB clubs and interested in competitions and skills development.</li> <li>• Tend to seek improvements in quality and accessibility of local trail networks and facilities and may be interested in participation in trail management.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Competitive Advantage – Accessible trails near towns</b></p> <p>A range of trails accessible to local riders and linked to towns.</p> <p><b>Gaps</b></p> <p>Diversity of trails.</p> <p>Skills Parks and links to central locations.</p> <p>In some cases, arrangements between clubs/ local riders and land managers for rider participation in management/ trail maintenance.</p>

The NT's iconic and accessible backcountry landscapes provide opportunities to develop and promote mountain biking experiences that are significantly different from, and compete with, mountain biking elsewhere in Australia. Most of Australia's established mountain biking destinations are in temperate woodland/ forest or subalpine / alpine locations. Alice Springs is the only desert destination in Australia and the Southern Hemisphere offering developed mountain biking activities. In the Top End the Kakadu, Litchfield and the Katherine areas offer spectacular tropical savannah and rugged landscapes that are significantly different from Australia's other tropical mountain biking destination at Smithfield in Cairns.

*'The dramatic landscapes of Central Australia and unrivalled beauty of the Red Centre offer the perfect backdrop for adventure mountain bike riders'*

NT Minister for Tourism



### 3. VISION

This chapter describes the framework that is the basis of this Master Plan – the Vision for developing mountain biking in the NT and the underlying principles and concepts that will guide achievement the vision.

#### 3.1 VISION

The Vision for mountain biking in the NT was agreed among the range of stakeholders.

*The Northern Territory will be recognized worldwide as the place to be different and to do the unexpected – to experience the heart of Australia on its world class mountain bike trails.*



#### **There will be a diversity of quality mountain biking opportunities in the NT**

- Alice Springs will be a leading world class hub for mountain biking with a range of trails, experiences and events suited to local, national and international markets.
- There will be a small number of Distinctive Rides that are suited to various markets and offer experiences of the NT's iconic landscapes.
- There will be ongoing development of a high quality trail network for Darwin suited to local riders and visitors and with potential for expansion of the network and markets as demand increases.
- In other places there will be ongoing development of quality trails in committed local communities as resources permit to encourage local participation, employment and health benefits and offer opportunities for visitors.

The Vision will be implemented collaboratively by public and private partners, including:

- PWCNT
- Tourism NT
- Regional Tourism Organisations
- Department of Lands and Planning
- Department of Sport and Recreation
- Mountain bike clubs (CARR, DORC, Pedals NT)
- Other government agencies
- Local Government
- Relevant land holders and native title holders
- Tourism operators
- Other business community and corporate sector
- Emergency Services - police/ambulance



## 3.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Broad guidance for implementing the Vision is provided by the following Guiding Principles.

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<b>1 High quality, diverse MTB experiences</b>	<p>We will focus on improving the quality of trail infrastructure and MTB experiences. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• high quality trails, trailheads and signage</li><li>• consistency in trail standards across tenures</li><li>• consistent design principles for sustainable, high quality trails</li><li>• offering a range of options for different skill levels (children, entry level, enthusiast, hard core)</li><li>• offering different types of MTB riding – cross country, gravity, adventure journeys, Epic rides, leisure riding</li><li>• concentration on developing a small number of outstanding experiences, rather than a larger number of mediocre experiences.</li></ul>
<b>2 Alice Springs – an iconic MTB destination</b>	<p>Alice Springs will be developed and promoted as the premier desert adventure mountain biking experience in Australia and the Southern Hemisphere.</p>
<b>3 Safe and inclusive mountain biking</b>	<p>Mountain biking in the NT will offer opportunities for everyone – local people, families and a range of visitors. Experiences will include those that are family friendly.</p>
<b>4 Accessible and well-connected trails</b>	<p>Mountain biking trails will be made accessible to local people and visitors through cycle paths and transport connections. Airports will provide services and facilities for travellers with bicycles. A small number of quality visitor hubs will be developed at trail networks.</p>
<b>5 A bicycle-friendly community</b>	<p>The NT’s tourism industry and communities will welcome mountain bikers by providing services, accommodation and products that meet the needs of mountain bikers at towns and airports near mountain biking networks.</p> <p>Mountain biking will be integrated into broader cycling strategies and developments through organisations such as Pedals NT.</p>
<b>6 Celebrate local culture</b>	<p>Mountain biking experiences and promotion will embrace and celebrate the NT’s local cultures and landscapes.</p>
<b>7 Good governance and strong partnerships</b>	<p>Governance arrangements that facilitate effective collaboration between land managers, riders and stakeholders are needed to achieve the Vision and address trail development challenges and MTB experience development.</p> <p>Good communication with stakeholders and observation of required approval processes will be important in developing trails and experiences. We will engage with and build relationships with local Indigenous communities in developing mountain biking opportunities.</p> <p>Research and monitoring of the impacts (environmental and economic) and communicating that to stakeholders.</p>
<b>8 Community benefits</b>	<p>Mountain biking will deliver social, economic and health benefits to local communities including opportunities for Indigenous people to gain income and employment.</p>

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### 3.3 MARKETING DIRECTION

#### 3.3.1 Positioning

The opportunity exists for the NT to become establish itself as an adventure mountain biking destination offering riding experiences that are unique in Australia, while also developing a range of other mountain biking networks that are suited primarily to the local community.

Positioning for visitor experiences should be aligned with the NT's 'Do the NT' brand and focus on the 'best of the best' of adventure riding in the NT's iconic landscapes. Riding in the NT should be presented as a 'rite of passage' for mountain biking adventure - *Have you done...?*

The following mountain biking positioning is recommended.

#### RECOMMENDED POSITIONING FOR NT MOUNTAIN BIKING

##### Positioning Statement:

*Are you ready for the best rides in Australia? Do the NT - the adventure riding capital of Australia*

Central Australia – “Ride the Red Centre”

Top End – “Tracks and Trails of the Top End”

##### Key Attributes and Visitor Benefits

- Stunning scenery to be explored and return to the comfort of the lodge
- Clearly marked and easy to reach trails (close to towns and accommodation)
- A mix of 'thrill and skill' trail options
- A sense of welcoming and community and great MTB support services
- Access to world-class trails that are worth bragging about
- A hub for some of the world's best MTB brands and showcase events



### 3.3.2 Hero MTB Experiences

Research on the global tourism visitor market shows that potential visitors are motivated in their holiday choices based on the ability to provide unforgettable and inspiring experiences. The mountain biking ‘hero experiences’ for the NT are as follows:



*Discover a world of **unrivalled scenery and endless skies** to be explored.*



*Adventure down ancient escarpments as part of an **adventure race like no other.***



*See why the world’s best MTB brands use the NT to **see if they have what it takes.***



*Be transformed and inspired by the **stories of an ancient land** and the world’s oldest living culture*

### 3.4 DEVELOPMENT DIRECTION

Prioritisation of mountain biking development will be needed to invest resources in the best way to achieve the Vision across the NT. The NT's existing and proposed MTB trails have been categorised as leading, supporting and local trails to assist with determination of priorities as shown in Table 10.

**Table 4: Recommended MTB Trail Categories**

LOCATION	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION & OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Alice Springs</b>		
<b>Telegraph Station</b>	Leading	To be positioned as the 'gateway' experience to MTB riding in the Alice Springs region, with relatively gentle to moderate cross country trail riding through scenic terrain. Two current major MTB events – <i>Easter in the Alice</i> and <i>The Redback</i> .
<b>West MacDonnell and Westside trails</b>	Leading	Once upgraded these trails will provide high-quality cross country and all-mountain trail experiences within interesting terrain featuring many excellent vantage points. Offers a back-country adventure suited to enthusiast and hard core riders, in addition to fun, shorter rides with options for the leisure rider.
<b>Eastside Trails</b>	Leading	Can provide high-quality cross country and all-mountain trail experiences offering excellent panoramic views from ridge-top trails. Good trail links to the Telegraph Station for extended rides and potential to develop back-country experiences with trail links to Emily and Jessie Gaps.
<b>Alice Springs Desert Park</b>	Leading	Potential for high quality, world-class all-mountain trail experiences. Strong potential for provision of gravity-oriented MTB experiences.
<b>Other Central Australia</b>		
<b>East and West MacDonnell Ranges</b>	Leading	Potential for an iconic overnight cross country experience to be developed and promoted as a hero experience
<b>Uluru – Kata Tjuta</b>	Leading	Existing trail ride around Uluru appeals to the leisure segment and provides complementary experience for enthusiast and hard-core segments visiting this world tourism icon. Potential to also develop a trail at Kata Tjuta, and to develop trail linkages between Uluru, Yulara and Kata Tjuta with associated adventure MTB experiences.
<b>Watarrka - King's Canyon</b>	Supporting	Potential trail ride at King's Canyon would appeal to leisure and enthusiast market segments as a complementary experience.
<b>Hermannsburg</b>	Local	Opportunity to develop MTB experiences targeting leisure and potentially enthusiast segments as an incidental activity. Could form part of events.
<b>Glen Helen</b>	Local	Opportunity to develop MTB experiences targeting leisure and potentially enthusiast segments as an incidental activity. Could form part of events.
<b>Pastoral Stations (numerous)</b>	Local	Opportunity to develop MTB experiences targeting leisure and potentially enthusiast segments as an incidental activity. Could also be used for events.
<b>Darwin</b>		

LOCATION	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION & OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Charles Darwin National Park</b>	Supporting	Main MTB destination for Darwin providing a high-quality but small cross-country trail experience and venue for local competitive and recreational MTB events.
<b>Hidden Valley and adjacent land</b>	Supporting	An area of land abutting Charles Darwin National Park which contains the so-called informal 'Pump Trails' and the adjacent Hidden Valley motor sports complex presents an opportunity to expand and enhance the existing trail network. This would potentially require acquisition of the 'Pump Trail' land and compatibility with the proposed Master Plan for Hidden Valley.
<b>Casuarina Coastal Reserve</b>	Local	Existing trail network providing an additional MTB opportunity for the local Darwin community.
<b>Howard Springs</b>	Supporting	The planning review for the Pine Forest at Howard Springs may provide an opportunity for formalisation of a trail network if it complements future use.
<b>Other Top End/ Northern</b>		
<b>Kakadu National Park</b>	Leading	Potential for cross-country touring routes including an adventure MTB experience.
<b>Litchfield National Park</b>	Leading	Potential adventure MTB experience targeting the leisure and enthusiast market segments. The Plan of Management provides for MTB experiences.
<b>Katherine</b>	Supporting	Potential ride linking town with Katherine Gorge. Potential for MTB experience in Nitmiluk National Park.
<b>Tennant Creek</b>	Local	Local level cross-country / shared-use trail network potential.
<b>Tiwi Islands</b>	Local	Local level cross-country / shared-use trail network potential.
<b>Nhulunbuy</b>	Local	Local use.



### 3.5 CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING THE VISION

Mountain biking in the NT faces a range of challenges that will need to be addressed to enable the development of quality mountain biking destinations.

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#### Trail formalisation

Formalisation of mountain biking trails is a critical first step to improving mountain biking opportunities in the NT including provision of high standards of trail design, construction and maintenance, risk management and sustainable management.

Formalisation of trails and the development of new mountain biking trails and associated facilities needs to be compatible with strategic and management plans for the relevant land and any planned future uses. Trail formalisation and development will also be subject to the normal planning approval processes applicable to the location and relevant land tenures. This includes potential native title implications for trails on Crown Land and native title processes such as the negotiation of Indigenous Land use Agreements.

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#### Quality & diversity of trails

A greater diversity of trail types, technical styles and difficulty levels; and improved connections between trail areas (such as the Westside and Eastside trails) will result in a higher quality mountain biking network. The terrain provides scope for investigation of trails with more elevation and longer descents. Consolidation of such improvements within the existing trail network will be a more sustainable and cost-effective approach than creating more trails over a larger area.

Throughout the NT there is a need for high quality signage across trail networks and consistent branding and integration of signage for all trail uses (e.g. MTB trails, shared trails, walking only). Trails need to be designed to enable emergency and trail maintenance access.

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#### Sustainability

The NT has many significant and sensitive environments and places of cultural and social importance, including to local Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities.

The location, design, construction and use of MTB trails must be compatible with local environments and natural and cultural values and go through the required approval processes.

Trails must be designed and constructed to a standard that will ensure they are resilient and will resist erosion under current and expected future rates of use.

Trails must be managed and maintained to cope with local conditions, such as desert soils and Top End wet seasons and weed spread.

Proliferation of unauthorised trail development needs to be stemmed through planning and management and community partnership and education.

There is a need to prevent unauthorised use of trails (and landscape) by motorised dirt bikes and other vehicles.

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#### Risk management

The NT has extreme and often remote arid and tropical environments that pose challenges for outdoor recreation and may be unfamiliar to many visitors. Safety of different users on shared trails has been an issue.

All users (locals and visitors) need information to prepare for climatic and environmental conditions

Signage and information is required to assist users to navigate trail network easily and avoid getting disoriented or lost.

More technically challenging trails that pose greater risk of injury should be located appropriately to minimise difficulty of rescue or recovery. Trail planning must accommodate the need for emergency access.

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Trail classifications may need to distinguish between fitness requirements and skill-level requirements.

A Code of Conduct will assist in specifying give-way/yield protocols for trail sharing (such as by cyclists, eBikes, walkers, runners, dog walkers) on shared-use trails.

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### **Governance, management & partnerships**

Effective governance and management of each trail network is required to implement Master Plan actions, pursue funding and resources and facilitate collaboration between partners and stakeholders. Depending on the location, management arrangements will need to have the capacity to handle cross-tenure trails and trail development approval processes. There will also need to be mechanisms in place to coordinate mountain biking experience partnerships (such as commercial operators, accommodation, other attractions, events, marketing and promotion) to ensure they are all on the same page in delivering the planned experiences.

Various models for trail network governance and management exist and include:

- a foundation, trust or incorporated society (often with representatives from relevant stakeholder agencies and groups) which spearheads policy, development, promotion, information provision, funding efforts and experience development with a partnership with the relevant land management agency to conduct day-to-day trail management and maintenance as part of its funded activities, assisted by volunteers. Examples include the long distance Munda Biddi Trail (mountain biking) and Bibbulmun Track (walking) in Western Australia
- one or more government agencies as the exclusive trail manager with ultimate responsibility for trail use, management and maintenance
- a land management agency as the primary trail manager (or the appropriate landholder for trails on private land) with significant assistance from volunteers (such as local clubs and users).

Additionally, an overall governance mechanism is required to oversee and coordinate the implementation of this Master Plan among government agencies and other stakeholders.

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### **Ensuring benefits**

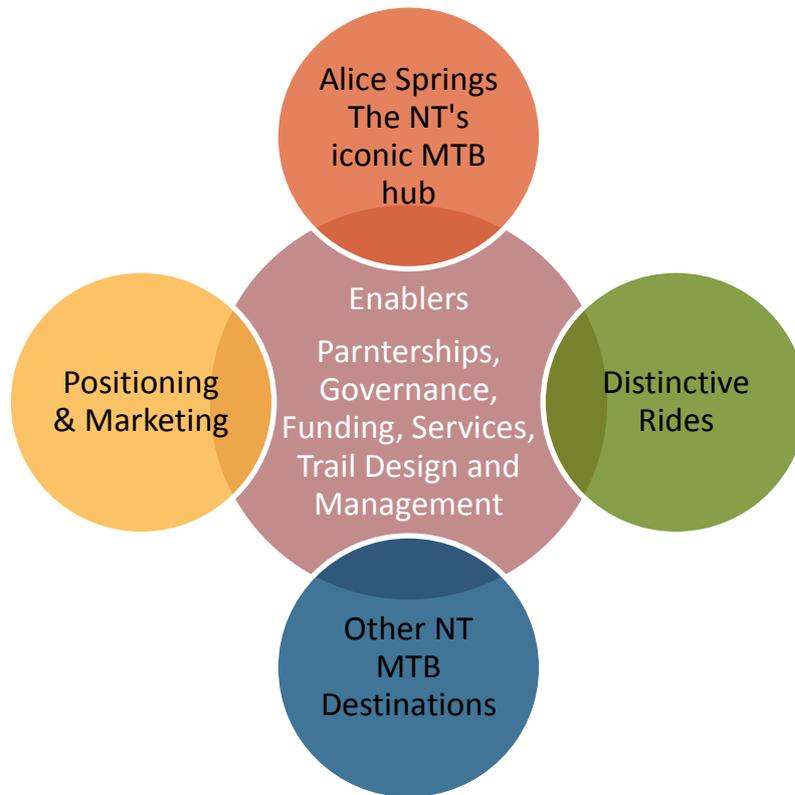
The development of mountain biking offers the potential for increased social and economic benefits across the Territory through direct and indirect economic benefits, employment in development and operational activities. It also offers potential for health benefits as people become involved in active outdoor sport.

The challenge lies in ensuring that the benefits are achieved across different sectors of the NT society including lower socio-economic groups and indigenous communities through offering ways all groups can have opportunities.

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## 4. ACHIEVING THE VISION

The Master Plan for mountain biking in the NT will be implemented under the following five major strategies.



## 4.1 ALICE SPRINGS – THE NT’S ICONIC MTB DESTINATION

Alice Springs will be the NT’s leading mountain biking hub providing world class trails and experiences for a range of markets (hard core riders, enthusiasts and leisure riders), mountain biking styles and activities in spectacular, rugged desert landscapes. It will include several iconic rides. Mountain bike riding in Alice Springs will attract mountain biking visitors from Australia and other countries and provide quality mountain biking and economic opportunities for local communities.

Achieving this aim requires improvements to trail infrastructure, related experiences and support services. The initial priority will be formalising and consolidating the existing trails in the Telegraph Station, West MacDonnell Ranges and the Westside and Eastside areas to provide a world class trail network and a strong basis for building supporting experiences and services. This should include a variety of trail types and difficulty levels and provision for night time riding.

Once this basis is established new opportunities will be investigated to further develop Alice Springs as a world class desert mountain biking destination and potentially achieve IMBA Ride Centre designation (starting with Bronze level designation). Such investigations will need to take account of factors affecting feasibility such as land tenure, management plans, stakeholder and community views and market demand.

An approach to developing an optimal, sustainable trail network for Alice Springs is provided in Appendix E.

At least three iconic rides are needed that become the starting point for the story of the experience of Alice Springs as the capital of the Red Centre. The rides are not the reason to come to the Red Centre, but they could become a reason to talk about the Red Centre post trip. Sharing stories of the achievements and the photos of the iconic places being explored will be a key driver to get riders thinking about whether they can ‘Do the NT’.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PRIORITY
<b>Alice Springs 1 – Consolidate and improve the existing infrastructure.</b>			
AS1.1	Install signage, secure planning and management approval and open the West Macs Track for use.	PWCNT	HIGH
AS1.2	Investigate development of a MTB trail connection between the West MacDonnell Track and Tyape Trail (Loop 3) in the Telegraph Station Reserve. This could be achieved most easily by extending the section of the Larapinta Trail open for MTB use to the junction of the Larapinta Trail and West MacDonnell Track. Upgrades to the Larapinta Trail section may be required to facilitate this.	PWCNT	HIGH
AS1.3	Implement the recommendations of the Westside Trail Assessment Report (2014) - including trail upgrades, signage installation and development of a trail link to Larapinta Drive opposite Flynn’s Grave site - and open the trails for use.	PWCNT	HIGH
AS1.4	Undertake an assessment of the existing Eastside trail network and plan upgrades, signage and formalisation.	PWCNT	HIGH
AS1.5	Implement the recommended trail upgrades, signage and trail formalisation for the Eastside trails open the trails for use.	PWCNT	HIGH
AS1.6	Develop quality trailhead facilities for the existing trail network including parking, signage, water, amenities and bicycle racks at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Telegraph Station – the major ‘branded’ gateway to the trail network</li> <li>Larapinta Drive / Lovegrove Drive – primary trailhead</li> <li>Gosse Street / Schwarz Crescent – primary trailhead</li> <li>Kurrajong Drive – secondary trailhead.</li> </ul>	PWCNT	HIGH
AS1.7	Link the development of trailheads to the NT Wayfinding program to avoid duplication of signage where possible.	ASTC	HIGH
AS1.8	Develop comprehensive, legible and ‘branded’ trail marking and way finding signage on the MTB trail network and linking paths to Alice Springs. Reflective markers for night-time riding should be included.	DCM	HIGH
<b>Alice Springs 2 – Investigate new MTB opportunities to add to the diversity of the Alice Springs MTB experience.</b>			
AS2.1	Commence investigations into optimum location(s) and opportunities for gravity-oriented riding experiences. Priority locations for investigation are Mt Gillen and Alice Springs Desert Park with potential linkages with Alice Springs Desert Park Visitor Centre,	PWCNT	MEDIUM

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PRIORITY
	the ridgetop adjacent to Heavitree Gap and the associated management track.		
AS2.2	Continue planning and design for a skills development area / terrain-park or pump track near the Telegraph Station.	ASTC / PWCNT	MEDIUM
AS2.3	Investigate and determine the optimum location and opportunities for a skills development area, pump track and dirt jumps in close proximity to the centre of Alice Springs, potentially at Gosse Street / Schwarz Crescent, Eastside. Instigate planning and design for the recommended area.	PWCNT	MEDIUM
AS2.5	Plan a purpose-built IMBA White or Green MTB trail in close proximity to Alice Springs to provide a high-quality entry-level MTB experience. Larapinta Drive / Lovegrove Drive is a priority location for consideration.	PWCNT	MEDIUM
AS2.6	Investigate the feasibility of development and formalisation of trail linkages and the trail network to the south-east of Alice Springs at Heavitree Range and linkages between Emily and Jessie Gaps.	PWCNT	MEDIUM
AS2.7	Pursue IMBA Ride Centre Bronze level designation for Alice Springs when trail development, facilities and services match the requisite IMBA criteria as a stepping stone to pursue Gold status.	Tourism NT / TCA	MEDIUM
AS2.8	Install lighting/reflectors on selected trails and offer the opportunity for night riding under the desert sky	ASTC / PWCNT	HIGH
AS2.9	Work with interested pastoral stations to identify mountain bike experiences that showcase the outback stations – including events and biking experiences	TCA	MEDIUM
AS2.10	Investigate the feasibility of a downhill / gravity trail at Arltunga Historical Reserve (White Ranges).	PWCNT	LOW
<b>Alice Springs 3 – Develop bicycle-friendly support services.</b>			
AS3.1	Provide public bicycle racks at major visitor locations, attractions and retail and entertainment areas in Alice Springs.	ASTC	HIGH
AS3.2	Provide a centrally located bicycle wash down facility.	ASTC	HIGH
AS3.3	Provide bicycle assembly facilities at Alice Springs Airport.	Alice Springs Airport	MEDIUM
AS3.4	Work with the local accommodation industry to develop and implement an accredited bicycle-friendly accommodation scheme in Alice Springs that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>criteria aligned to the IMBA Mountain Bike Friendly Hotel Guidelines (<a href="http://imba.com/destinations/MTB-friendly-hotel-guidelines">imba.com/destinations/MTB-friendly-hotel-guidelines</a>)</li> <li>provision of the criteria to accommodation providers to assist them in gaining accreditation</li> <li>conduct of assessments of establishments to determine bicycle-friendly status</li> <li>a means of identifying accredited establishments (such as through a logo).</li> </ul>	RTOS	MEDIUM
AS3.5	Encourage local businesses and tourism operators to provide or improve support services to assist mountain biking experiences such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bicycle and bicycle visitor shuttle services</li> <li>bicycle and equipment rental for a range of markets, including children and leisure riders</li> <li>well promoted bicycle shops and repair services.</li> </ul>	TCA	MEDIUM
<b>Alice Springs 4 – Develop quality information and interpretation suited to MTB markets.</b>			
AS4.1	Establish a website providing comprehensive information on Alice Springs mountain biking. The website should include transport and access information, trail details, maps, safety information, events and links to accommodation, tour operators, attractions and the regional tourism website.	TCA	HIGH
AS4.2	Provide comprehensive information (including brochures and maps) on Alice Springs mountain biking at the Alice Springs Visitor Centre.	TCA	HIGH
AS4.3	Develop and implement an Interpretation Plan for the Alice Springs MTB trail network. The Plan should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>themed rides for the leisure and enthusiast markets</li> <li>stories of the surrounding landscapes and local people</li> <li>quality signage</li> <li>use of downloadable apps for digital delivery of interpretation.</li> </ul>	PWCNT	MEDIUM

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PRIORITY
AS4.4	Conduct a photo shoot of new hero images that reflect the brand positioning of the destination	Tourism NT / TCA	MEDIUM
<b>Alice Springs 5 – Extend the Alice Springs MTB event offering.</b>			
AS5.1	Continue to develop and promote the <i>Easter in the Alice</i> and <i>Redback</i> events to offer experiences that attract range of participants, MTB markets and spectators.	Mountains bike community Tourism NT / TCA	HIGH & ONGOING
AS5.2	Investigate and pursue hosting of other MTB events / competitions such as the Australian and/or Oceania MTB Championships.	Tourism NT / TCA	ONGOING
AS5.3	Investigate opportunities to promote an iconic ‘Ride the Red Centre’ event for a range of MTB markets. Ideally the event would incorporate the region’s unique selling points of hot days and cool nights with day and evening rides in spectacular, desert and rocky landscapes.		LOW

## 4.2 DISTINCTIVE RIDES

In addition to experiences in Alice Springs the NT will build its reputation for world class mountain biking through offering a small number of distinctive adventure rides that showcase some of the Territory’s iconic remote landscapes and visitor destinations. The location and feasibility of these distinctive rides should be investigated as a high priority in collaboration with land managers and stakeholders. Potential for development of some rides to IMBA Epic Ride standard should be considered. Depending on their location and length, the rides could be packaged to include linked accommodation and other activities of interest to the leisure and enthusiast markets.

The following locations are recommended for investigation.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PRIORITY
<b>Distinctive Rides 1 – Investigate development of a small number of distinctive, world class adventure rides in the NT’s iconic landscapes</b>			
DR1.1	Investigate the feasibility of a full-day/multi-day ‘epic’ ride and back-country experience(s) in the Western or East MacDonnell Ranges potentially including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>camping or cabin accommodation either on the trail or linked with existing facilities and campsites</li> <li>links to sites of interest such as Simpson’s Gap, Standley Chasm, Ross River Homestead, Arltunga.</li> </ul> <p>The investigation should be in the context that the Larapinta Trail will remain a walking trail and will not be made available for shared use beyond the short section east of the Stuart Highway.</p>	Tourism Industry / TCA	HIGH
DR1.2	Investigate the feasibility of an adventure ride in Kakadu National Park (likely in the south of the park). <i>(See also Action ONT2.1 for overall planning for mountain biking in the Park.)</i>	Parks Australia/ Tourism NT	MEDIUM
DR1.3	Investigate the feasibility of an Epic Ride (32+km) or multi-day trail in Litchfield National Park.	PWCNT	MEDIUM
DR1.4	Investigate the feasibility of expanding the existing ‘ride-around-Uluru’ experience for the leisure and enthusiast markets by trail linkages to the Yulara Resort and to Kata-Tjuta.	Parks Australia and tourism industry	LOW
DR1.5	Investigate the feasibility of a multi-night ride on the existing 4WD access road parallel to the Southern Walking Track to 9 <sup>th</sup> Gorge at Nitmiluk National Park.	PWCNT	LOW
DR1.6	Work with local artists to install recognisable features at the best photo spots on the Distinctive Rides to encourage riders to take selfies or landscape shots to share on social media.	PWCNT	LOW

### 4.3 OTHER NT MOUNTAIN BIKING DESTINATIONS

A range of other places in the NT will be developed as supporting or local hubs for mountain biking. Priority will be given to consolidation and formalisation of trail networks in Darwin as a supporting hub to provide quality mountain biking to local, hard core, enthusiast, leisure markets. There is potential to develop the Charles Darwin National Park trail network and adjacent land as the centre for mountain biking (and potentially shared trail use) in Darwin offering trails, associated services and facilities and a range of events.

The formalisation and extension of mountain biking trails in and near Katherine and development of mountain biking experiences in Litchfield, Nitmiluk and Kakadu National Parks will be investigated as a medium term priority. In the longer term the potential and feasibility of local mountain biking networks at other towns and visitor destinations will be considered.

Investigations will require a collaborative approach between land managers, local communities and stakeholders.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PRIORITY
<b>Other NT 1 – Develop Darwin as a supporting MTB hub for hard core, enthusiast, leisure and local markets</b>			
ONT1.1	Continue to develop the cross country mountain biking trail network in Charles Darwin National Park as a small-scale supporting experience for a range of markets and a venue for local competitive and recreational events.	PWCNT	HIGH
ONT1.2	Consolidate the mountain biking network in the Casuarina Coastal Reserve.	PWCNT	HIGH
ONT1.3	Investigate the feasibility of extending the mountain biking trail network from Charles Darwin National Park to adjacent land and the Hidden Valley motor sports complex. This investigation should include consideration of existing and future demand for mountain biking in Darwin, land acquisition needs and the potential for development of a mountain biking centre with facilities and services.	DORC, DLPE	MEDIUM
ONT1.4	Investigate the formalisation of the mountain biking trails at the Howard Springs Pine Forest subject to planning processes about the future use of the area.	DLPE	MEDIUM
ONT1.5	Develop a cycle path connection from Darwin city to Charles Darwin National Park to facilitate access to the mountain bike trails.	City of Darwin	LOW
ONT 1.6	Following consolidation of the Darwin trail networks investigate development of a major annual event to attract visiting and local mountain bikers. One option to be investigated is an event scheduled before the Top End Gran Fondo to leverage off Darwin's main road cycling event and create a wider festival of cycling.	TTE / Tourism NT	LOW
ONT1.7	Provide the mountain bike clubs in Darwin and Alice Springs with access to regular track building and maintenance training opportunities to assist them to be actively involved in track maintenance.	PWCNT	MEDIUM
<b>Other NT 2 – Investigate the development of Kakadu National Park as an adventure ride destination</b>			
ONT2.1	Investigate the potential of mountain biking in Kakadu National Park, including use of existing management trails. Subject to park policy and management considerations, develop a mountain bike plan for Kakadu National Park that includes day and overnight riding experiences and a distinctive ride ( <i>see action DR1.2</i> ).	Parks Australia / Tourism NT	MEDIUM
<b>Other NT 3 – Consolidate existing mountain biking trails in Katherine and investigate development of the Katherine area as a supporting MTB hub taking advantage of its proximity to the significant visitor destination of Nitmiluk National Park.</b>			
ONT3.1	Investigate the feasibility of formalising the informal riverside trail into a quality mountain biking trail linking Katherine to Nitmiluk National Park.	Tourism NT / PWCNT/Katherine Town Council	MEDIUM
ONT3.2	Investigate the potential for mountain biking in Nitmiluk National Park subject to policy, management and stakeholder considerations.	PWCNT	LOW
ONT3.3	Investigate a day or multi-day riding experience suitable for independent or supported rides in the Katherine / Nitmiluk National Park area.	PWCNT	LOW

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PRIORITY
<b>Other NT 4 – Investigate the feasibility of developing local MTB trails in a range of NT towns and visitor destinations.</b>			
ONT4.1	Investigate the feasibility of mountain bike use of the 6km Segway trail from the Watarrka resort to Kings Canyon.	PWCNT / Tourism Industry	MEDIUM
ONT4.2	Investigate the feasibility of converting the existing Ernest Giles walking track (a 22km / 2 day walk) to shared use, making it a potential opportunity for a half-day MTB experience for leisure and enthusiast markets.	PWCNT / Tourism Industry	MEDIUM
ONT4.3	Investigate development of local MTB trails at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hermannsburg</li> <li>• Karlu Karlu (Devils Marbles)</li> <li>• Tennant Creek</li> <li>• Nhulunbuy</li> <li>• Tiwi Islands.</li> </ul>	PWCNT / Tourism NT	LOW

## 4.4 POSITIONING AND MARKETING

### 4.4.1 Positioning

Leveraging the ‘Do the NT’ brand positioning, the MTB proposition is to ask the question of the riders – are you ready to do the NT? In this way other destinations are not competitors but merely stepping stones to the ultimate challenge of *Doing the NT*.

Becoming the adventure riding capital of Australia allows the NT to create a comparative advantage over other destinations around the concept of adventure trails that take riders into some of the most challenging and most rewarding spots in Australia, as well as events that challenge the norm - such as night events.

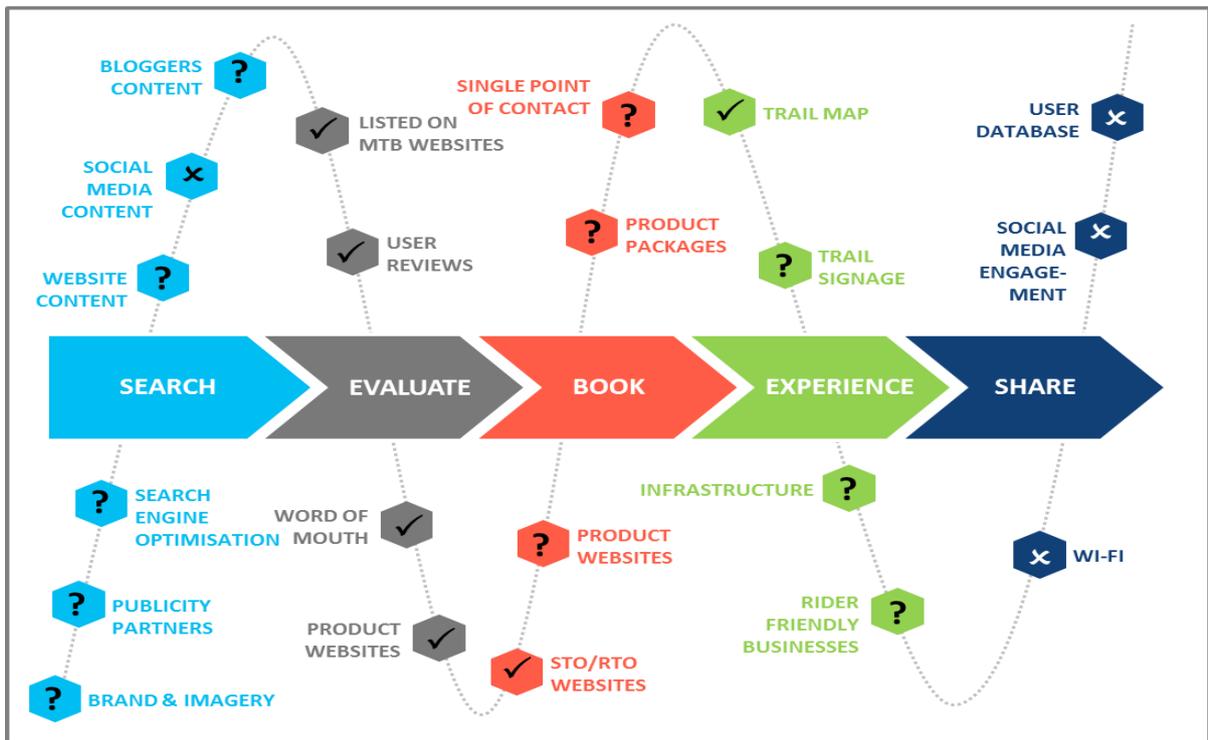
### 4.4.2 Marketing

To successfully promote the NT as the Adventure riding capital of Australia, there is a need to create a library of images that mix thrills and skills with a spectacular backdrop to start a new vernacular of mountain biking images for Australia. It is not just a matter of what you are riding through but what you are riding on (sand, solid rock, huge stones). Dedicated campaigns are needed, primarily driven by publicity that is focussed on creating a new story in Australian mountain-biking, ‘adventure riding’. Working with the industry to attract adventuring riding events to the NT, Tourism NT can build the destination’s profile while building the image and video library. Adopting hashtags like #adventureNT will help to draw together social sharing on multiple channels rather than trying to create a dedicated MTB social channel. Regular features on NT website with links to the destinations will be needed.

For Central Australia and Alice Springs the ‘*Ride the Red Centre*’ message needs to be incorporated into all relevant marketing material so that its unified positioning is relayed to potential visitors immediately and provides inspiration to visit. This can be done in a variety of ways, largely through the various information delivery systems that are in place for a destination (see Figure 10).

For the Top End, as new trails are established a comparable trails map and brochure to the Red Centre map needs to be created. Content on the trails and imagery can follow as trails are established and formalised.

Figure 1: NT MTB marketing material assessment



LEGEND: ✓ Quality sources / information / inspiration available: ✗ Does not currently exist; ? Not clearly defined / needs improvement

### CASE STUDY – MARKETING: RIDE ROTORUA

Rotorua is home to some of the best MTB trails in the world. Its dedicated website – *Ride Rotorua* – is a one-stop shop for anything a MTB visitor might need when coming to the region. This includes vital and easy to access information on accommodation, bike hire, food, services, shops, activities, trail maps and trail information. While large, printable versions of the trail maps are not available online, information is supplied on where and how to purchase maps that may be useful for the various trail areas.

While *Ride Rotorua* itself does not have dedicated Facebook or social media pages, mountain biking in Rotorua is promoted through the region’s dedicated event pages. The Rotorua Bike Festival, which has been running since 2013, regularly updates its Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages, with posts reminding visitors about the fun of the previous year’s event. On these pages, the underlying theme of year-round visitation to Rotorua is also constantly reinforced, with vivid images, videos and promotions posted regularly.

*Rotorua Bike Festival* currently has over 12,000 Facebook ‘likes’, 599 Twitter followers and 459 Instagram followers.

Source: <http://www.riderotorua.com/>



ACTION	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PRIORITY
<b>Positioning &amp; Marketing 1 - Ensure the <i>Ride the Red Centre</i> marketing campaign effectively promotes the improved and new mountain biking opportunities in Alice Springs and Central Australia to the range of markets.</b>			
PM1.1	Redesign the ' <i>Ride the Red Centre</i> ' marketing collateral to better target and appeal to mountain bike riders by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>redesigning the brochure to showcase new trails, connections to the Alice Springs trail network and CBD and displaying actual distances</li> <li>Developing a soft cloth trail map that riders can also use as a glasses cleaner.</li> </ul>	TCA/Tourism NT	HIGH
PM1.2	Periodically revise the <i>Ride the Red Centre</i> marketing campaign to reflect ongoing changes in the mountain biking offer, to promote Alice Springs as an iconic MTB destination and distinctive rides.	TCA/Tourism NT	ONGOING
PM1.3	Leverage mountain biking events that are held in Alice Springs to encourage visitor (in addition to local) participation.	TCA/Tourism NT	ONGOING
<b>Positioning &amp; Marketing 2 – Improve the focus on mountain biking opportunities as part of the NT's brand and visitor marketing activities.</b>			
PM2.1	Create a social media and online publicity calendar for mountain biking events and activities throughout the NT.	Tourism NT	HIGH
PM2.2	Develop an annual market research program to track mountain biking visitation and demand for the NT and the economic impact of mountain biking.	Tourism NT / CARR / DORC	HIGH
PM2.3	Encourage each region to appoint an MTB 'expert' who is part of the trip planning process either through the Visitor Centres or online Q&A to allow MTB travellers to access local knowledge and plan their trip.	TCA / TTE	MEDIUM
PM2.4	Revise the way mountain biking is promoted in <i>Do the NT</i> marketing campaigns and other relevant NT marketing to better reflect the Vision for NT mountain biking and appeal to mountain biking markets, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incorporation of the hero experiences to highlight the depth and variety of the NT's MTB offering</li> <li>more imagery coupled with a clear brand position to showcase why the Red Centre and Top End deliver remarkable MTB experiences.</li> <li>better promotion of the NT's relationship with top MTB brands and their showcase events (i.e. Red Centre is used as a test track for new bikes and equipment).</li> </ul>	Tourism NT / TCA	ONGOING
PM2.5	Encourage regional tourism organisations to improve the focus on mountain biking opportunities in their regions as well as adopting more specific MTB content and messaging on their websites with a single call to action.	TCA/TTE/Tourism NT	ONGOING
PM 2.6	Foster partnerships with key publications and bloggers to boost the NT's MTB credibility.	TCA/TTE/Tourism NT	ONGOING
<b>Positioning &amp; Marketing 3 – Better integrate the mountain biking hero experiences within the trip planning information.</b>			
PM3.1	Undertake a mountain bike specific photo shoot across the NT to collate a library of images that showcase the landscape and terrain and highlight the NT's competitive advantage of adventure riding	Tourism NT / RTOs	MEDIUM
PM3.2	Update the content on the Do the NT website to include a dedicated section on mountain biking under Outdoor Activities with links to the RTO pages on how to plan a trip to the region	Tourism NT	MEDIUM
PM3.3	Update the content on the RTO's websites to feature mountain biking precincts and experiences and provide information on how riders can plan their trip to the region	RTOs	MEDIUM
PM3.4	Work with the industry to embrace the hero experience in their messaging and to refer to their bike friendly facilities when promoting their products in print and online	RTOs / Industry	LOW

## 4.5 ENABLERS

A range of measures are required to underpin mountain bike trail and experience development and guide implementation of the Master Plan consistently across the NT and in each trail network including:

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	PRIORITY
<b>Enablers 1 – Develop mountain biking governance and trail management arrangements to guide implementation of the Master Plan and sustainable development and management of each trail network.</b>			
E1.1	Establish an NT-wide governance arrangement representing relevant land managers, other government agencies, partners and stakeholders to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>guide implementation of the Master Plan</li> <li>assist in attraction of funding and investment in MTB development</li> <li>guide trail formalisation processes</li> <li>guide high quality MTB trail management and maintenance.</li> </ul>	Tourism NT/PWCNT	HIGH
E1.2	Agree the organisation that will lead the management of mountain biking development in Central Australia and the Top End and the accountability of different stakeholders	Tourism NT/PWCNT	HIGH
E1.3	Support the establishment of a community-based 'Friends' group to support trail development and management through volunteerism and fund-raising. <i>(Refer Makara Peak, NZ model: <a href="http://www.makarapeak.org/About">www.makarapeak.org/About</a>)</i>	Tourism NT/PWCNT	HIGH
E1.4	Finalise the MOU between PWCNT and DORC to provide for agreed roles and responsibilities for trails in Charles Darwin National Park including maintenance of trails by riders.	PWCNT/DORC	HIGH
E1.5	Develop a program for regular monitoring of visitor numbers and visitor satisfaction with each trail network.	PWCNT	HIGH
E1.6	Monitor and report on track usage through a network of track counters used across the network.	PWCNT	LOW
<b>Enablers 2 – Facilitate implementation of the Master Plan through improved access to funding and resources.</b>			
E2.1	Investigate funding sources, grant programs and commercial sponsorship opportunities for mountain bike trails, maintenance programs, monitoring and events.	ALL	ONGOING
<b>Enablers 3 – Improve the quality of MTB trail design, management and maintenance throughout the NT consistent with best practice standards.</b>			
E3.1	Prepare Trail Classification and Design Guidelines for the NT's MTB trails based on IMBA trail guidelines and incorporating features tailored to the terrain and environmental conditions of the NT and guidelines for regular monitoring of trail conditions and user impacts.	PWCNT	HIGH
E3.2	Develop an approach to best practice risk management of mountain biking in the NT that is compatible with any relevant national standards and the specific conditions of mountain biking in the NT (such as heat, remoteness, emergency access to trails.) <i>(NB: There is a proposal for the development of national Adventure Activity Standards for Australia.)</i>	PWCNT	HIGH
E3.3	Develop a Code of Conduct for NT mountain bike trail use incorporating guidelines for rider behaviour, shared trail protocols (such as give-way priorities), safety and minimal impact riding. Include site specific requirements for particular locations or trails where relevant.  Distribute the Code on the MTB website, and through MTB clubs, bicycle shops, schools and tourist information outlets.	PWCNT	HIGH
<b>Enablers 4 – Encourage development of bicycle-friendly services throughout the NT.</b>			
E4.1	As mountain biking trails are developed throughout the NT, consider extending the proposed Alice Springs bicycle-friendly accommodation scheme <i>(see Action AS3.4)</i> to other MTB destinations where there is an appropriate level of visitor demand.	Tourism industry	LOW
E4.2	As mountain biking trails and experiences are developed, encourage local tourism operators and businesses to provide services such as transport, bicycle retail and repair, guided tours.	Tourism industry	LOW

## 5. MTB TRENDS AND MARKETS

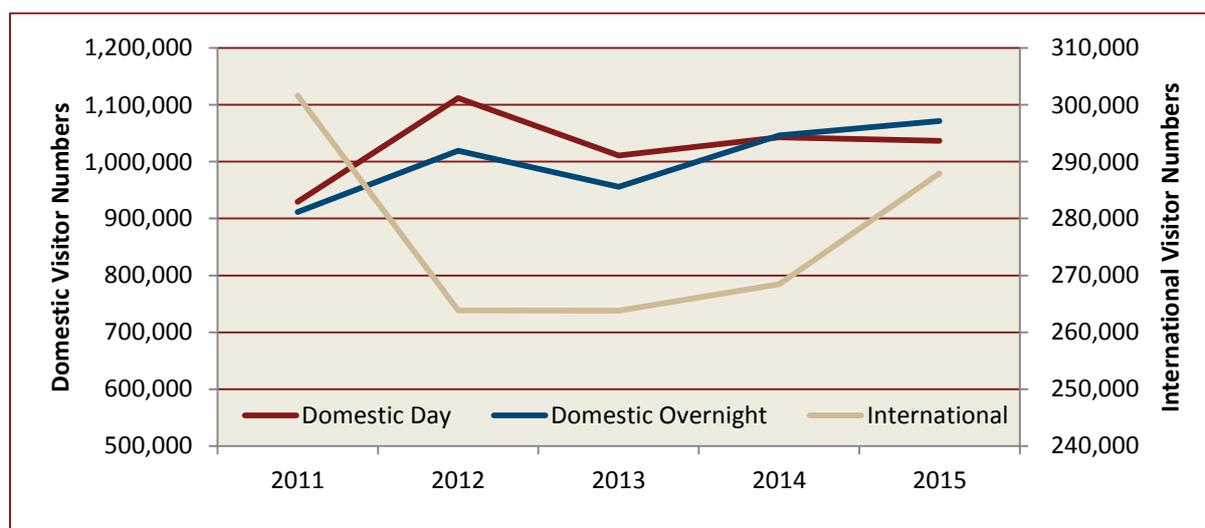
This chapter provides insights into how the NT is tracking in the national mountain biking market, as well as exploring the value and opportunities in this growing market. Starting with an understanding of the total NT tourism trends, it is clear that mountain biking is a growth segment with more growth potential for the NT given the right positioning.

### 5.1 NT TOURISM TRENDS

The National and International Visitor Surveys (NVS and IVS) collected by Tourism Research Australia for the year ending June 2015<sup>3</sup> indicate that the NT received approximately 2.3 million visitors - made up of 1.04 million domestic day trips, 1.07 million domestic overnight visitors and 288,000 international visitors. This represents an overall visitor increase of 12% over the previous five years (see Figure 1) that is predominantly driven by the domestic markets - domestic day visitation has increased by 12% since 2011 and domestic overnights have increased by 18%. Although international visitation witnessed a sharp decline between 2011 and 2012 (likely driven by the continuing economic pressures faced by the Western markets) there has been a 2% average annual increase since 2012.

The main purpose of visitation to the NT is holiday and leisure purposes (52%), followed by business (23%) and visiting friends and relatives (15%).

**Figure 2: Five Year NT Visitation Trends**



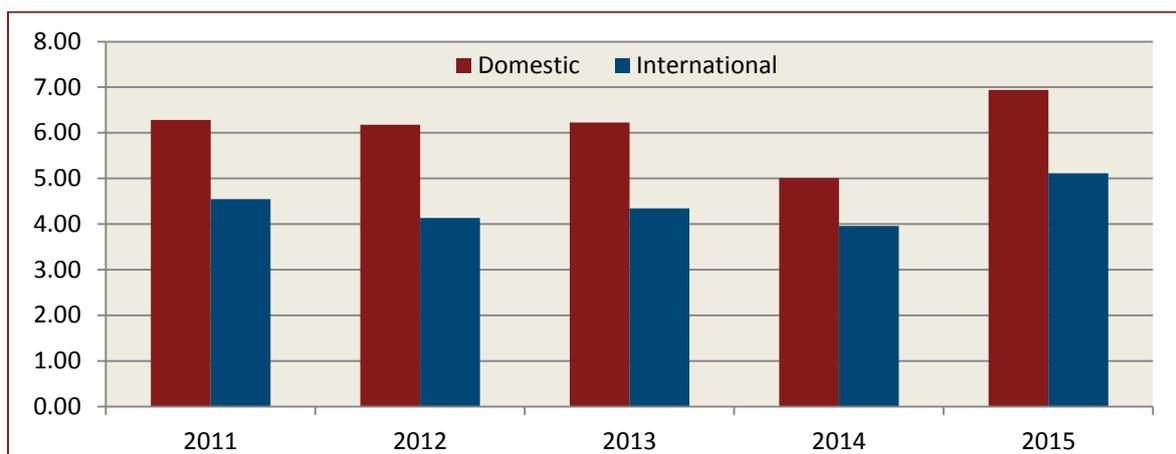
Given the NT's location and size, 99% of all day trip visitors are from the NT with the remaining 1% coming from Queensland. Domestic overnight visitors are primarily from within the NT (40%), followed by NSW (16%), Queensland, Victoria and WA (all providing 11%). Domestic overnight visitors from WA have shown the largest increase in visitation since 2011 – up by 203%.

The top three NT international source markets for the year ending June 2015 were the USA (14%), the UK (14%) and Germany (11%). The China market has shown the most increase over the previous five years with visitation to the NT up by 166% since 2011 although this has come from a relatively small base.

The average length of stay for the NT's domestic overnight visitors is 6.9 days and 5.12 days for international visitors. This is the highest average length of stay for both markets since 2011 (see Figure 2).

<sup>3</sup> Tourism Research Australia, National and International Visitor Surveys for years ending June 2011-2015

**Figure 2: Average Length of Stay of NT Visitors, 2011 to 2015**



Visitors to the NT spend nearly \$3 million annually, with the highest expenditure coming from the large domestic overnight segment, followed by domestic day visitors (see Table 5).

**Table 5: NT Visitor Expenditure, Year Ending March 2015**

	TOTAL VISITOR SPEND	AVERAGE SPEND PER NIGHT
Domestic Day	\$472,000,000	\$170.26
Domestic Overnight	\$1,456,000,000	\$220.09
International	\$170,000,000	\$98.35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,098,000,000</b>	<b>\$169.01</b>

## 5.2 THE AUSTRALIAN & NT CYCLE AND MTB MARKETS

The size, patterns and needs of the Australian mountain biking market can be divided according to whether they are local residents or visitors and according to their riding preferences as:

- Family / Leisure riders - ride occasionally for recreation and enjoyment
- Enthusiasts - ride at least fortnightly and enjoy more technical rides
- Hardcore Riders - ride weekly (some daily) and participate in competitions, events and group rides. Many are members of clubs.

The Australian resident mountain bike market is estimated to be around 679,000 people



### 5.2.1 The Local Market

The local mountain biking market includes all mountain bikers in a local area. There are limited sources available for estimating the level of participation in mountain biking in both the NT and Australia as cycling participation data is not usually differentiated into cycling types. The main sources are as follows.

Using these participation rates, with a resident NT population of 227,900, it is estimated that 20,511 local residents cycle of which 15,178 are mountain bike riders (see Table 4).

**Table 6: Assumptions Used to Estimate the Local NT MTB Market**

	NT
Resident Population	227,900
Participation in cycling	9%
Local cyclists in NT	20,511
% of local cyclists who MTB	74%
Local mountain bikers	15,178

However this participation is unlikely to be evenly distributed across the Territory. Although Darwin and Alice Springs comprise 62% of the NT's resident population, it is estimated that both regions would see increased participation rates in mountain biking (80%<sup>4</sup>) compared to the rest of the NT. This higher participation would likely be due to the increased availability of trails and the growing awareness of mountain biking in both places.

Based on the assumptions that Darwin and Alice Springs have 80% of the total Territory's MTB participation, and that regional participation would mirror that of the NT's club membership proportions, it is estimated that:

- Darwin (pop. 116,215) has an estimated 6557 resident mountain bike riders
- Alice Springs (pop. 25,186) has an estimated 5586 mountain bike riders
- The remainder of the NT has approximately 3000 resident mountain bike riders

### 5.2.2 The Cycle Visitor Market

#### 5.2.2.1 Australian Cycling Visitors

The National and International Visitor Surveys (NVS/IVS) conducted in Australia currently only ask for participation in the activity of 'cycling', and do not differentiate between road cycling and off-road cycling and mountain biking.

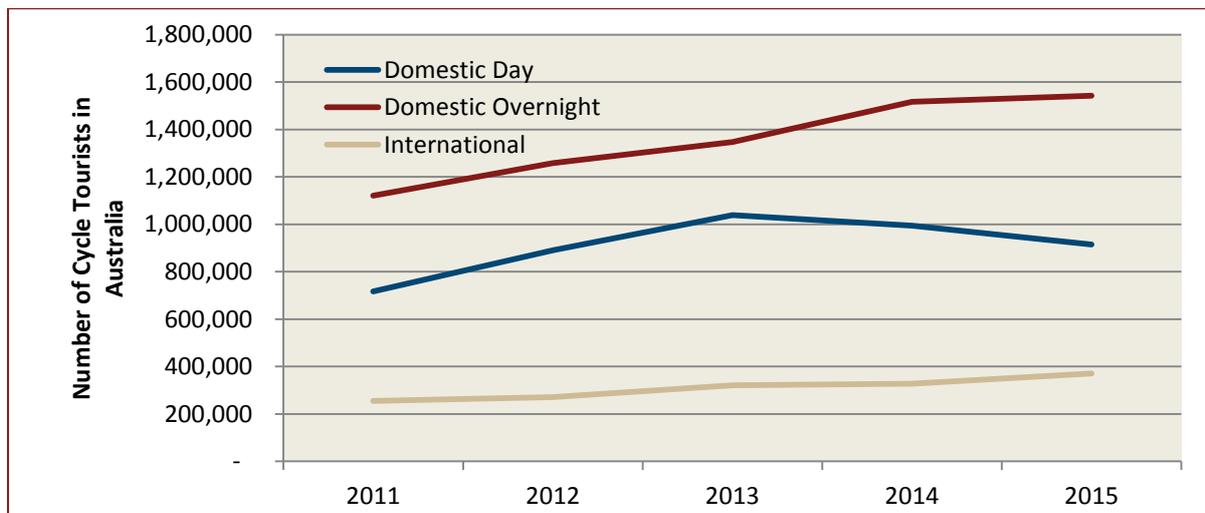
The NVS and IVS results for the year ending June 2015 indicate that over the past five years, there has been significant growth (35%) in tourists who participate in a cycling activity.

Since 2011, steady increases can be witnessed across cycle tourism by domestic overnight and international visitors – which have seen a 38% and 46% growth respectively over the past five years (see Figure 3). Although since 2013 there has been a 4% per annum decline in day trip cycle visitors, there has been a total increase in this market over the past five years. Overall there has been an average growth per annum of 6% in the day trip cycle market, 8% in the domestic overnight cycle market and 9% in the international cycle market.

Visitor survey results also indicate that as many as 1.1% of all Australian tourists participate in a cycling activity during their trip – a percentage that has steadily increased over the past five years. This represents a share increase of 21% and 26% in visitors and visitor nights respectively from 2011 (a 4% per annum increase in the share of all visitors).

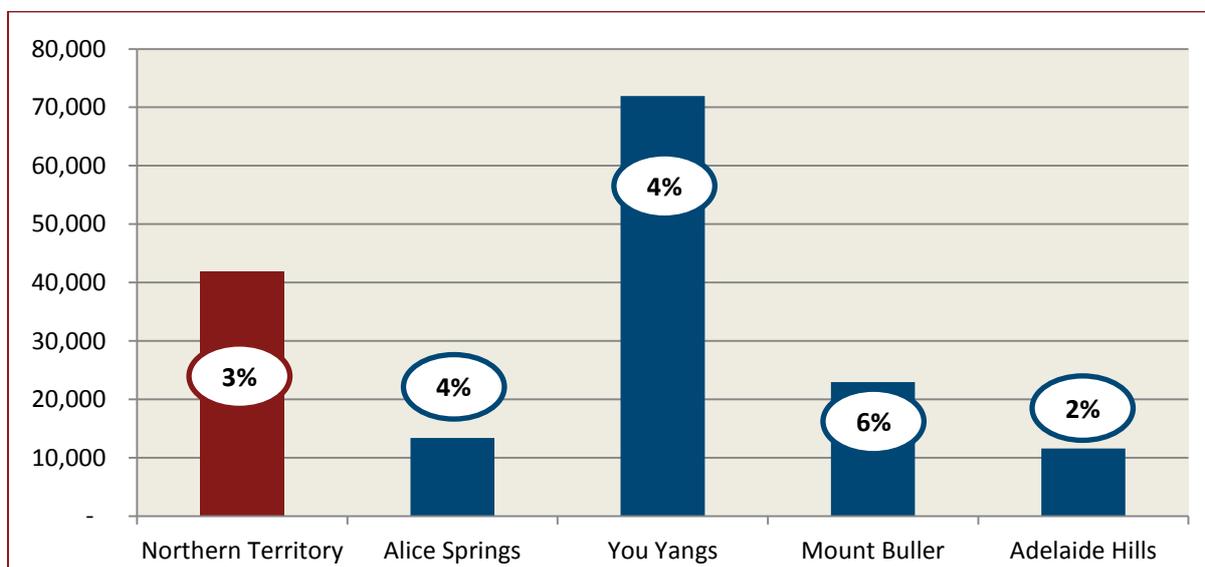
<sup>4</sup> Based on personal observations held by NT mountain bike stakeholders

**Figure 4: Five Year Australian Cycle Tourist Trends, 2011 to 2015**



Compared with other Australian mountain biking destinations Alice Springs has a lower volume but higher proportion of cycling participation (see Figure 4). While Alice Springs receives 13,400 cycle visitors, that equates to more than 4% of total overnight visitation. In the seasonal destination of Mount Buller (in the Victorian Alps) nearly 6% of all visitors undertake cycling activities whereas in the high volume short-break destination of the Adelaide Hills only 2% of their visitors undertake cycling. The You Yangs receives over 70,000 cycle visitors due to its close proximity to Melbourne.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 5: Comparative Volume and Share of Cycling Visitors to Australian MTB Destinations<sup>6</sup>**



These results from the National and International Visitors Surveys (2014) show that the Northern Territory has a similar proportion of cycling visitors as a percentage of all visitors to other destinations (3%), although this proportion is higher in Alice Springs (4%). Successful riding destinations such as Mt Buller have grown this as high as 6% which could be an aspiration for the Red Centre.

<sup>5</sup> Derived from National and International Visitor Surveys, Tourism Research Australia (2015) and personal communications with popular MTB destinations.

<sup>6</sup> Alice Springs Mountain Biking Survey (Draft Report), *Tourism NT (2015)*

### 5.2.2.2 Mountain Biking Visitors

As there is no ongoing measure of visitor participation in mountain biking while on holidays in Australia the following assumptions have been used to estimate mountain biking visitation.

In Table 7 these assumptions are applied to cycle tourism data in the NVS and IVS on visitors who participated in cycling on a trip more than 40km from their home. According to the NVS and IVS, in the year ending September 2014 2.8 million visitors to Australia and 47,300 visitors to the NT cycled on their holiday (on a trip more than 40km from their home). Applying the above assumptions (see Table 5) this equates to 424,300 mountain bike visitors in Australia and an estimated 35,000 to the NT. The national average length of stay for domestic visitors who cycle is 4.7 days (the international sample is too small to be reliable), with 29% being daytrips which equates to nearly 1.5M visitor days. The NT has a higher average length of stay at 6.8 days, generating 215,300 visitor days.

The Australian MTB tourism market is estimated to be around 424,300 visitors a year. That is equivalent to all resident MTB riders taking one trip of over 40 km from home in a year

**Table 7: Estimated Australian and NT MTB Tourist Market (YE June 2015)**

	Australia	NT
Cycle Tourists (NVS & IVS Actuals)	2,828,800	47,500
Estimated MTB Share	15%	74%
Estimated MTB visitors	424,300	35,000
Estimated MTB visitor days	1,486,300	215,300

Based on these assumptions, the NT currently attracts just over 10% of the national mountain biking visitor market. This is comparatively high, since the NT attracts only 2% of the national overnight visitor market. It is likely the national market is slightly larger than 424,300 trips, but in the absence of reliable data from the NVS and IVS the best estimate can only be drawn through the assumptions available. For this reason the future growth targets for mountain biking in the NT should be based around average annual growth rates and a system for estimating mountain biking visitors (such as through annual surveys) should be introduced.

Using NVS data on cycle tourism visitors as a proxy for mountain biking visitors it can be seen that the majority of domestic cycle visitors come from the capital cities. The number of cycle visitors from each city is only loosely correlated to population size, with Melbourne producing the highest number of cycle visitors, despite having a smaller population than Sydney (see Figure 5).

The NVS and IVS data suggests that cycling / mountain biking visitors have a similar length of stay in the NT as other leisure visitors (6.8 nights vs 6.9 nights), which is longer than the average stay in other regions. This is consistent with the general trend in the domestic market for slightly longer stays in the NT. Cycling / mountain biking visitors are more than twice as likely to come from Victoria compared to just 11% of all domestic overnight visitors to the NT coming from Victoria.

**Figure 6: Estimated Percentage of the Australian MTB Tourist Market**



**5.2.2.3 Characteristics of NT mountain biking visitors**

In 2013, TCA and Tourism Northern Territory undertook a small survey (with a sample size of 62) of event participants at *Easter in the Alice* and the *Ingerreke Enduro* mountain biking events and found that of survey participants:

The majority of participants were ‘hardcore’ riders which is to be expected at an event, with 37% enthusiasts, and 17% leisure / family riders (see next section).

**5.2.2.4 Trends and potential for MTB visitor growth in the NT**

While it is not possible to track the growth of the mountain biking market in the NT specifically (only cycle tourism), it is assumed that MTB trips are increasing at a slightly faster rate than all cycle trips. This is based on the fact that globally the proportion of mountain bike sales (including hybrid bikes) is increasing globally faster than total bike sales<sup>7</sup>.

Across the NT, the NVS and IVS data shows that participation in cycling on holidays has increased by almost 3% per annum since 2011, with a drop in 2013. This decline in 2013 aligns with a similar drop in Australia in 2013 (down 10% from 2012 nationally). Conversely, Alice Springs experienced an overall increase in cycle visitor numbers to a peak in 2014, but has shown a decline over 2015 (equating to -4% per annum).

**GLOBAL CYCLE TOURISM TRENDS**

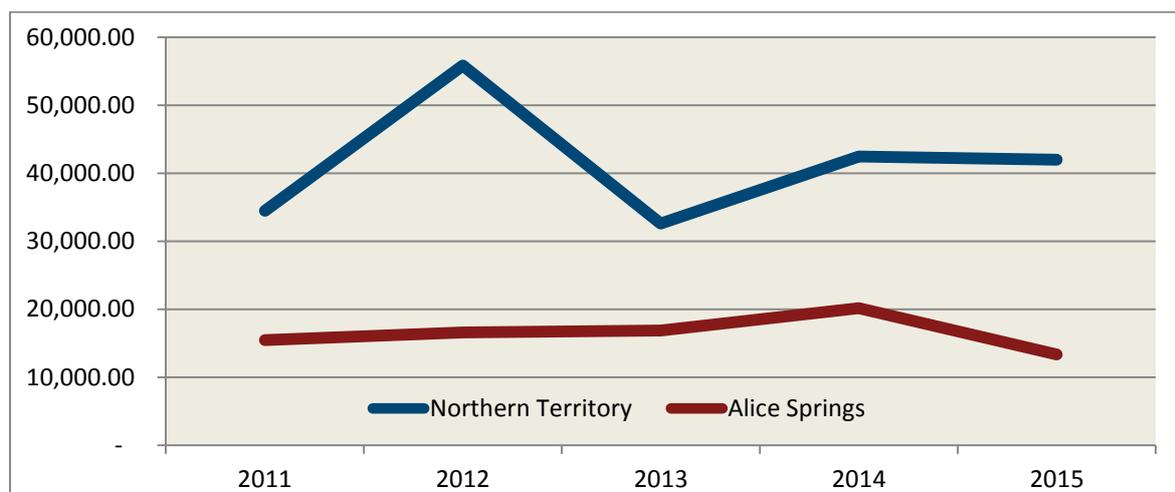
Cycle tourism (which includes mountain biking) is considered to be increasing globally. The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) conducted a benchmark survey of cycle tour companies worldwide in 2014 which estimated that:

- cycle tour companies saw a 59% increase in profits over 2013
- Europe, Asia and North America are the leading cycling destinations
- the Pacific, including Australia, is a small part of the global market
- mountain bike tours form 20% of total cycle tours – 13% on dirt tracks/roads and 7% on single track
- mountain bikes are provided by 57% of tour companies – suggesting there are unsealed road/track components in non-mountain bike specific tours. The survey indicated that 14% of trips were on gravel roads.

Source: ATTA (2014). *Bicycle Tourism – 2014 Survey*, [www.adventuretravel.biz](http://www.adventuretravel.biz)

<sup>7</sup> Data from the National Bike Dealers Association, 2014.

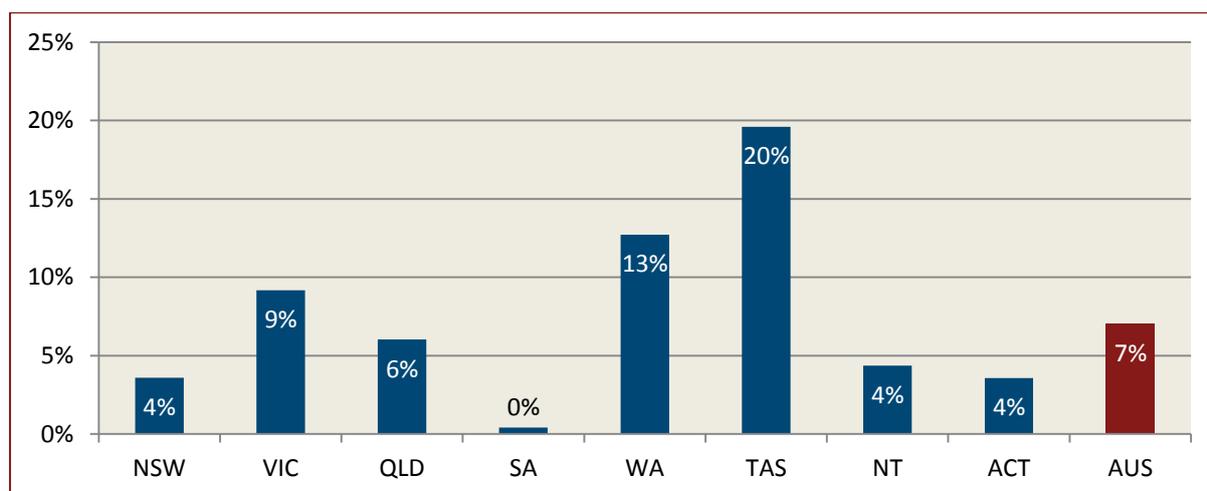
**Figure 7: Cycle Visitor trends (2011-2015) NT and Alice Springs (NVS, IVS)**



Nationally, cycling on holidays has seen a 7% per annum growth since 2011 (see Figure 7). The NT has experienced the fifth highest level of annual growth (4%), less than half that of the leaders Tasmania (20%) and Western Australia (13%).

Appropriate marketing and mountain biking experience development would be needed to increase mountain biking visitation in the NT above the national rate of 7% per annum.

**Figure 8: Cycle Visitor Trends by State 2006-2014 (NVS, IVS): Average Annual Growth (%)**



### 5.2.2.5 Potential Economic Impacts of MTB Visitation

Estimating the economic impact of mountain biking requires the application of a number of assumptions, therefore it is recommended that priority be given to seeking national support for an additional 'activity' to be added to the national and international visitor survey for 'rode on tracks and trails on a mountain bike'. The key assumptions used to estimate the economic value of mountain biking to the Northern Territory is outlined below:

- That mountain biking accounts for 74% of the 'cycling' market in the NT (estimate confirmed through the bike shops)
- The mountain biking length of stay is the same as the cycling length of stay (5.8 nights)
- The mountain biking market is made up of three segments; the proportions that travel to the NT are similar to other destinations (Leisure 30%, Enthusiasts 50%, Hard-Core 20%)
- The three segments have different levels of expenditure, but the same average length of stay:
  - Leisure (30%) spends the same as the NT leisure market

- Enthusiast (50%) spends the same as the NT leisure market
- Hard Core (20%) spend as per the research in Alice Springs in 2013

The expenditure data that currently exists in terms of spend /rider is provided in the results of the 2013 Alice Springs mountain biking event survey described above. The survey indicated that respondents' average expenditure was \$2,859, equating to \$440 per day. This level of expenditure was well above the regular visitor daily average spend for the NT which is estimated from the NVS and IVS as \$169 per day.

Table 8 below shows the average spend per leisure MTB rider (in the three segments) using the estimated length of stay and expenditure figures from the National and International Visitor Surveys and the estimated volume of mountain biking visitors described earlier in this chapter.

**Table 8: Estimated Value of Mountain Biking to the NT (2015 and 2020)**

MTB SEGMENT	VISITORS		VALUE	
	CURRENT	2020	CURRENT	2020
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34,994</b>	<b>47,510</b>	<b>\$ 45,287,768</b>	<b>\$ 66,826,733</b>
<i>Leisure (30%)</i>	<i>10,498</i>	<i>14,253</i>	<i>\$ 10,319,283</i>	<i>\$ 15,227,158</i>
<i>Enthusiast (50%)</i>	<i>17,497</i>	<i>23,755</i>	<i>\$ 17,198,806</i>	<i>\$ 25,378,597</i>
<i>Hard core (20%)</i>	<i>6,999</i>	<i>9,502</i>	<i>\$ 17,769,679</i>	<i>\$ 26,220,979</i>

Applying the average expenditure results from the 2013 survey to the estimated 'hard core' riders (\$440) and regular visitor daily average spend for the NT (\$169) to the balance of the NT mountain biking visitation, it is estimated that the current value of mountain biking tourism in the NT is worth around \$45.3M. If the NT further develops its mountain biking product to lift its market profile and increase NT's mountain biking visitation to the national average of 7% per annum, there is potential for mountain biking visitation to contribute expenditure of approximately \$66.8 million by 2020.<sup>[1]</sup>

#### **5.2.2.6 Potential Social Benefits of Outdoor Adventure Activities**

There has been significant research into the benefits of outdoor adventure activities such as mountain biking and the positive impact they can have on personal health and well-being<sup>[2]</sup>. Social benefits that have been identified include:

More specific research on the benefits of mountain biking have also shown that riding puts less pressure on joints compared to other high impact sports such as running thus making it a more long-term activity. The sense of challenge and adventure that mountain biking provides has also been found to improve the overall happiness of riders.

From a wider social perspective additional visitors to a destination results in additional expenditure which also supports local jobs and businesses. In particular, mountain biking visitors are keen to understand the place they are visiting and enjoy local products. As mountain bike riders like to get off the beaten track, mountain biking can create opportunities for visitation in places not visited by other travelers. This in turn provides opportunities for new enterprises, which, in the NT have the potential to be Aboriginal-owned businesses providing services to those riders travelling to less developed areas.

Implementation of the Master Plan also has potential for employment and new business enterprises for Aboriginal communities through track construction and maintenance work as well as tourism business associated with trail experiences. Aboriginal people may also be encouraged to participate in mountain bike riding through programs (including provision of bikes) in schools and communities.

The establishment of new mountain biking events also has the potential to create business opportunities for local communities.

<sup>[1]</sup> Future economic impact includes Australian visitor and spend forecasts by the Tourism Forecasting Committee (2015 publication).

<sup>[2]</sup> Outdoor Council of Australia (2008). *Australian Outdoor Adventure Activity Benefits Catalogue*, <http://mountainbike.about.com>.



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## APPENDIX A – Planning Context

There are several current or scheduled land use planning processes which may have implications for mountain biking development in the NT.

- The NT Government is developing a Master Plan for Darwin’s Hidden Valley motor sports complex near Charles Darwin National Park. Mountain biking groups have expressed interest in the extension of nearby mountain bike trails into Hidden Valley.
- The Northern Territory Planning Commission is developing the Litchfield Sub regional Land Use Plan for the Litchfield municipality (located to the east and south of Darwin) to address the needs associated with population growth in the greater Darwin region. The Pine Forest informal mountain biking area at Howard Springs is proposed as a ‘Rural Activity Centre’ that will enable a greater density of development than surrounding rural land uses.
- Development of a new Plan of Management for Litchfield National Park by the PWCNT has included consultation with mountain biking groups. Litchfield National Park, situated about 100km south west of Darwin via a sealed road, is a popular visitor destination attracting over 260,000 visitors a year. The draft Plan released for public comment in October 2015 proposes development of a dedicated mountain biking trail to be planned with mountain biking groups and to be promoted as a park visitor experience.
- The NT Department of Sport and Recreation is developing a Sport and Active Recreation Master Plan

## APPENDIX B – Review of Marketing Material

MARKETING MATERIAL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Alice Springs MTB Trails Brochure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality presentation with trails clearly marked</li> <li>Includes the messages ‘Ride the Red Centre’ and ‘The Outback Adventure capital of Australia’ on the last page</li> <li>Trail maps and descriptions for Telegraph Station trails (including trail notes for riders)</li> <li>Has information on regional events, accommodation and attractions that might appeal to MTB riders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some important information is missing – such as trail distances, distance from town</li> <li>Key messages are on the last page</li> <li>Only includes Telegraph Station trails</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More rider specific information (best coffee, local beers, rider-friendly accommodation and other services)</li> <li>Consider moving key messages upfront and making them more specific to MTB (not just adventure in general)</li> <li>Could be expanded to include trails beyond the Telegraph Station once they are in operation</li> <li>Could use more targeted hashtags (e.g. #mtbNT, #mtbalice)</li> </ul>
<b>How to Do the NT brochure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Features mountain biking as an activity in Alice Springs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No detail of MTB trails and activities</li> <li>No MTB imagery in brochure except for a small one on the Alice Springs page</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could better promote the ‘Ride the Red Centre’ message</li> </ul>
<b>Webpage (on Parks and Wildlife website)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail information and maps available for download</li> <li>Information on MTB equipment hire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only one page of information</li> <li>Information is not engaging for the reader</li> <li>Web link comes up third in Google search for ‘Alice Springs mountain bike’ and it is not clear that this is the official webpage</li> <li>No links to social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a dedicated and more interactive tourist-focused MTB website that has same look and feel as the brochure</li> <li>Could better promote the ‘Ride the Red Centre’ message</li> </ul>
<b>Travel NT website</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedicated page on cycling and mountain biking</li> <li>Provides brief descriptions of MTB and cycle areas</li> <li>Links to further information (predominantly cycling club websites)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No standalone MTB section – it is combined with road cycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New imagery required</li> <li>Create a section under Things to Do, Outdoor Activities (MTB currently just a few lines under Adventure)</li> <li>Could better link to purchasable product and the precincts offering trails</li> </ul>

MARKETING MATERIAL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Discover Central Australia website</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated MTB page in 'Things to Do' section</li> <li>• Prominently displays Alice Springs MTB promo videos</li> <li>• Links to brochure and map downloads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brochure is called 'Ride the Red Centre' but that title does not appear on the front cover</li> <li>• No links to Parks and Wildlife or operator sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could better link to purchasable product</li> <li>• Could better promote the 'Ride the Red Centre' message</li> </ul>
<b>TTE website</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No content on MTB trails</li> <li>• Includes some MTB product (Two Wheel Dreaming)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No dedicated MTB content</li> <li>• Difficult to find operators through navigation (best found through search)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once trails are developed MTB could be added (or as part of Adventure) to the Things to Do page</li> </ul>
<b>Social Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #ntaustralia</li> <li>• #alicesprings</li> <li>• #mtb</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No dedicated social media</li> <li>• Hashtags don't specify Alice Springs or NT MTB activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create dedicated social media accounts/pages full of rich imagery (such as Bucket List items on Pinterest)</li> <li>• Could better promote the 'Ride the Red Centre' message</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX C – Assessment of the NT’S MTB performance

CRITERION	CHARACTERISTICS	CURRENT SITUATION	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS/ ISSUES
<b>TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE, DESIGN, SUPPORT FACILITIES AND MANAGEMENT</b>			
<p><b>1. Quality infrastructure</b></p>	<p>Quality, sustainable mountain bike trail infrastructure that is suitable for the type of riding conducted (such as cross country, downhill) is vital to provide a quality riding experience and minimise environmental impacts.</p> <p>Internationally accepted guidelines for sustainable mountain bike trail design are provided by the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA).</p> <p>Design of shared use trails (such as with walkers) needs to take account of the safety of all users, such as through lines of sight and measures to limit bicycle speed on corners and downhill sections.</p> <p>Trailheads should be accessible and provide route and other information. Trails should be well signed. There should be provision for visitor amenities such as water, toilets, shelter and picnic facilities close to trails.</p>	<p>The existing (mostly informal) trail network at Alice Springs is sufficiently expansive to form the basis of a world-class trail network. The spectacular rugged desert landscapes around Alice Springs as the setting for mountain biking are an advantage to providing distinctive trails appealing to both core mountain bikers and visitors seeking a mountain biking experience.</p> <p>Lack of ‘gravity’ trails constrains the availability of downhill riding in Central Australia, although the terrain presents very good potential for other disciplines of mountain-biking and a better mix of trails.</p> <p>The Outback Cycling Trail Station is a valuable facility for mountain bike riders but apart from this, trailhead facilities in Alice Springs are inadequate.</p> <p>Trail infrastructure in Darwin region is more suited to local riders as its extent and diversity is limited.</p>	<p>Formal trail infrastructure in Alice Springs needs to be expanded with the transition of more of the informal trail network authorised through the correct processes.</p> <p>High quality trailhead facilities and trail improvements are required wherever trail hubs are established.</p> <p>All mountain bike infrastructure developed in the NT will need to be consistent with IMBA trail guidelines to ensure sustainability.</p>
<p><b>2. Diversity of cycling for different markets/styles</b></p>	<p>Successful mountain biking destinations typically offer a range of trails for different riding styles (such as cross-country, downhill, freeride, all mountain/enduro) and technical difficulty levels. A range of opportunities attracts a wider range of users and assists mountain biking by non-expert visitors.</p> <p>Pump tracks for training and skills development are also valuable and assist in generating new and younger growth in the sport.</p>	<p>Diversification of the Alice Springs trail network is critical as the existing network primarily caters for cross-country style riding at the intermediate level.</p> <p>Other Central Australia MTB experiences such as Uluru ‘ride around the Rock’ are well suited to the leisure market segment and are an excellent complement to development of Alice Springs position as the hub for Central</p>	<p><b>Alice Springs</b></p> <p>Development and upgrade of the extensive existing Alice Springs cross country trail network needs to provide a variety of difficulty ratings. A typical split across a network is 20% beginner, 50% intermediate and 30% advanced level trails. Some competition-specific trails (providing greater technical challenges) are required to meet the needs of mountain bike</p>

CRITERION	CHARACTERISTICS	CURRENT SITUATION	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS/ ISSUES
	<p><i>For example, the Queenstown Trails network in New Zealand includes 5 mountain bike facilities catering for a range of difficulty levels.</i></p> <p>There is a trend to development of individual trails that are suitable for a range of riding genres and skill levels.</p> <p>The IMBA Trail Difficulty Rating System is widely used in mountain biking destinations and bike parks as the way to categorise the different levels of trails.</p>	<p>Australian mountain biking.</p> <p>Darwin and other areas of the Top End are not well positioned and have inadequate trails to become world class in the short to medium term.</p>	<p>racing.</p> <p>There is scope to improve rider experience within the existing network by re-designing some trails to make better use of available elevation and vantage points.</p> <p>This is potential to develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all-mountain / gravity-enduro trail experiences</li> <li>• back-country (potentially multi-day) experiences – subject to suitable routes and environmental and cultural approvals</li> </ul> <p>There is limited potential for dedicated downhill trails.</p> <p><b>Top End</b></p> <p>In Darwin there is scope to diversify the difficulty of trails within existing trail networks.</p> <p>There is some potential to develop distinctive back-country rides or an Epic Ride experience in the Top End (subject to suitable routes and environmental and cultural approvals). Trails would likely be cross-country in style due to the terrain and lack of sustained elevations. Potential locations are Litchfield National Park and Kakadu National Park.</p>
<p><b>3. Leading and supporting cycling experiences</b></p>	<p>Successful mountain biking destinations will have one or more leading trails or rides that characterise the experience offered and attract many riders.</p> <p>The experience quality recognised by IMBA designation of a Ride Centre (a destination with a variety of quality trails and riding experiences) or an Epic Ride (a demanding 32+km, mainly single-track ride in a natural setting) can attract mountain bikers.</p>	<p>Rides in Alice Springs have not yet achieved iconic status and do not yet offer experiences comparable with leading rides in other places.</p>	<p>There is strong potential to develop iconic trail experiences at Alice Springs, based on the existing trail network and potential extensions. Key opportunities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all-mountain/ gravity-enduro trail experiences</li> <li>• development of the network as the leading hub for mountain biking in the NT with</li> </ul>

CRITERION	CHARACTERISTICS	CURRENT SITUATION	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS/ ISSUES
	<p><i>Mount Buller in Victoria is Australia's only current (2015) accredited Ride Centre with Bronze status. In New Zealand Rotorua and Nelson have Gold Ride Centre accreditation and Bike Taupo has Silver status. The Australian Alps Epic at Mount Buller in Victoria has received Epic Ride status.</i></p>		<p>potential for recognition as an IMBA Ride Centre.</p> <p>There is also potential to develop distinctive extended back-country (potentially multi-day) experiences in some of the NT's spectacular landscapes that would be attractive to a range of markets.</p>
<p><b>4. Sufficient cycling opportunities to fill 2 to 3 days</b></p>	<p>A mountain biking destination that attracts a range of local and holiday visitors needs to have more trails than can be ridden in one day. Ideally, there will be sufficient riding opportunities for 2 to 3 days.</p>	<p>Alice Springs will be able to offer 2 to 3 days of riding opportunities for the average enthusiast once the 100-120km of proposed trails are developed or authorised.</p> <p>Darwin and other NT mountain biking sites do not currently provide extended riding opportunities.</p>	<p>There is further potential to develop an additional 2 or more days of world class riding experiences within close range of Alice Springs.</p> <p>There is also further potential to develop several more days of riding experiences across the Red Centre.</p> <p>Darwin would need additional trails to become a world class destination and is more suited as a hub for local riders and visitors.</p>
<p><b>5. Accessibility</b></p>	<p>Mountain bike trails that are easily accessible from population centres, visitor hubs and transport routes are likely to receive higher use. This also facilitates the holding of events.</p> <p>Access arrangements to trails should take account of the needs of trail users – such as transport of bikes to trailheads, one-way journeys on linear trails.</p>	<p>The existing network of cycle paths throughout Alice Springs provides excellent linkage between the town and the MTB trails.</p> <p>At Darwin, Charles Darwin National Park is within short riding distance from the CBD.</p>	<p>Both Alice Springs and Darwin Airports would be more bicycle-friendly if there was a bike service area where bikes can be assembled before and after a flight.</p> <p>A trail or cycle path connection from the Alice Springs airport to town would improve accessibility for visitors with bikes.</p> <p>A trail or cycle path connection from Darwin city to Charles Darwin National Park would facilitate access from the city to the mountain bike trails.</p>
<p><b>6. High quality pre-trip and on-site information</b></p>	<p>Successful mountain bike destinations typically have comprehensive websites that provide information on trails, products and services, destination activities, safety, accommodation, events and other activities</p>	<p>The NT and Alice Springs lack a comprehensive mountain biking website and information services.</p>	<p>A comprehensive integrated website complemented by maps and apps will be necessary to establish and promote the NT as a</p>

CRITERION	CHARACTERISTICS	CURRENT SITUATION	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS/ ISSUES
	<p>and have links for booking.</p> <p><i>Examples are the Whistler Mountain Bike Park website (<a href="http://www.whistlerblackcomb.com">www.whistlerblackcomb.com</a>); Fruita Colorado (<a href="http://gofruta.com/play">gofruta.com/play</a>) where mountain biking information is integrated with total destination information; Ride Rotorua website (<a href="http://www.riderotorua.com">www.riderotorua.com</a>) covering Rotorua mountain biking opportunities; Stromlo Forest park, Canberra, Australia (<a href="http://www.stromloforestpark.com.au">www.stromloforestpark.com.au</a>); and 7Stanes in Scotland (<a href="http://www.7stanesmountainbiking.com">www.7stanesmountainbiking.com</a>).</i></p>	<p>There are some issues with shared use trails such as at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station, in Charles Darwin National Park and the Casuarina Coastal Reserve.</p>	<p>mountain bike destination.</p> <p>The development and publication of a code of practice and community education are required.</p>
<p><b>7. Effective governance and sustainable management of trail networks</b></p>	<p>Mountain biking destinations need effective governance and management of trails and trail networks to ensure quality experiences and trail maintenance.</p> <p>The range of stakeholders needs to be involved - including government agencies, event managers, facility managers, the tourism industry, cycle businesses and cycle clubs and organisations</p> <p>In many places the local mountain biking community is an important participant in management and trail maintenance. This involvement is also an effective way to channel the interests of local mountain bikers into formal trails and divert interest from developing illegal trails which have unacceptable environmental impacts.</p> <p>A budget and income sources need to be allocated for trail management and maintenance. This may include allocation of a proportion of trail user fees to this purpose.</p>	<p>The PWCNT has emerged as the lead government agency in coordinating the development of MTB opportunities and managing trail assets in and near Alice Springs.</p> <p>The Alice Springs MTB Action Group has been formed comprised of representatives of the local community and riders.</p> <p>An MOU is being developed between PWCNT and DORC for Charles Darwin NP</p>	<p>Alice Springs MTB Action Group has the potential to play a key role and/or be an effective forum in coordinating community efforts behind MTB development.</p> <p>A critical challenge for Alice Springs is to unite and activate the community behind a common vision and plan in a sustainable manner.</p> <p>In Darwin DORC is actively engaged in pursuing opportunities and negotiating an MOU with the PWCNT.</p>
<p><b>8. Events to drive visitation and market</b></p>	<p>Events and competitions at the local, regional and national/international levels have been important in</p>	<p>In Alice Springs the <i>Redback MTB Enduro</i> (multi-day stage race) has been well-established as a national level MTB event for</p>	<p>Alice Springs should continue to build / evolve these events and explore opportunities to develop new events and/or host others (such</p>

CRITERION	CHARACTERISTICS	CURRENT SITUATION	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS/ ISSUES
<b>positioning</b>	growing many mountain bike destinations. <i>Examples include signature events such as Crankworx which began in Whistler and is now also held at Les 2 Alpes (France) and Rotorua (New Zealand). The holding of the 2009 Mountain Bike World Championships at Stromlo Forest Park (Canberra, Australia) contributed to building the reputation of that mountain biking destination shortly after trail construction.</i>	more than a decade, while the <i>Easter in the Alice</i> event is a new addition capitalising on the leisure / fun MTB segment.  Visitors to the region also participate in local events and regularly contact clubs in Alice Springs and Darwin when in the Territory to get information about trails and events.	as the Australian and/or Oceania MTB Championships) to attract different markets.  There are a number of events run by DORC in Darwin that are also open to visitors. There has been interest in Darwin hosting the Oceania Championships in recent years.
<b>9. Local cycling culture and community support</b>	Successful cycling destinations have roots in the local community and tourism industry which supports cycling and cycle visitors and helps to provide a cycle-friendly destination experience. Supportive communities (through cycling clubs, business and tourism operators) are likely to be receptive to implementation of cycle tourism initiatives and to be partners in the development of cycling infrastructure, products and services.  Many significant mountain biking destinations have been developed under partnerships between government agencies, land managers, the tourism industry and the mountain biking community.  <i>Whistler is a classic example, being a partnership between the Whistler-Blackcomb resort, local government, tourism businesses and the Whistler Off Road Cycling Association.</i>	There is a strong existing MTB community and culture in Alice Springs and relatively high rates of cycling participation across the community broadly. Darwin has a small but strong MTB community underpinned by DORC.  A small mountain bike community also exists in Katherine and riders are associated with the Katherine Multisport Club.	MTB and BMX clubs will be integral to future growth in mountain biking and will need to ensure a strategic approach that enables them to focus their efforts in the most effective manner.  Growth in interest in mountain biking across the Territory will complement and encourage the community to support the activity where they see it is contributing a range of social, economic and health benefits
<b>THE TOURISM / VISITOR EXPERIENCE</b>			
<b>10. A strong overall visitor experience</b>	A nature-based experience is important to many mountain bikers as part of the trail adventure. Spectacular natural settings and other destination activities are also important motivations for mountain bike visitors.	The NT offers exceptional visitor experiences through a diversity of extraordinary natural settings which have the potential to offer an adventure setting for mountain biking unlike any other MTB destination in Australia.	Continue to develop destinations to match market needs and include mountain biking as part of the positioning.

CRITERION	CHARACTERISTICS	CURRENT SITUATION	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS/ ISSUES
	<p>A strong destination experience is needed to attract general visitors who may then undertake mountain biking as part of their holiday.</p> <p><i>Many iconic mountain biking destinations are in attractive natural settings – such as Whistler in British Columbia (Canada), Rotorua and Queenstown (New Zealand), 7Stanes (Scotland).</i></p>	<p>The iconic rugged desert landscapes in Alice Springs and Central Australia.</p> <p>A range of other visitor offerings is available across the Territory.</p>	
<p><b>11. Bicycle-friendly accommodation and food providers</b></p>	<p>Facilities geared to the needs of cyclists contribute to the ease and enjoyment of their cycling experience. Such services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accommodation that welcomes cyclists, has office hours suitable for cycle touring itineraries, provides suitable meals and packed lunches, provides secure cycle storage and repair areas, provides laundry facilities</li> <li>• cafes and food services along cycling routes and which open at times suitable for cycling itineraries. Cafes where cyclists can pause on a trip and meet other cyclists have become a characteristic of the cycling culture</li> <li>• bike parking at attractions.</li> </ul> <p>Tourism operators in some successful destinations have developed cycle-friendly amenities and packages.</p> <p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit Scotland (Scotland’s national tourism organisation) has a Cyclists Welcome scheme that certifies accommodation, food establishments and attractions that offer certain cycle-friendly services. Over 1,000 accommodation establishments participate.</li> <li>• Italy Bike Hotels (<a href="http://www.italybikehotels.com">www.italybikehotels.com</a>) is a group of hotel owners throughout Italy who provide</li> </ul>	<p>There is a good foundation of cycling infrastructure in Alice Springs with high rates of cycle use by the local community.</p>	<p>Additional effort will be required working with the tourism industry, business, government agencies and other organisations to develop and publicise bicycle-friendly services.</p>

CRITERION	CHARACTERISTICS	CURRENT SITUATION	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS/ ISSUES
	<p>specified services to cater for cycle visitors.</p> <p><i>IMBA has developed Bike Friendly Hotel Guidelines specifically for mountain biking - <a href="http://www.imba.com/destinations/MTB-friendly-hotel-guidelines">www.imba.com/destinations/MTB-friendly-hotel-guidelines</a>.</i></p>		
<p><b>12. Supporting bike-related services</b></p>	<p>The destination should have cyclist support services to provide for the specific needs of visitors travelling by bicycle. The contact details of these services should be readily available to visitors online, at visitor information centres and at accommodation. Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bicycle equipment and repair shops</li> <li>• bicycle hire</li> <li>• bicycle transport options – such as bike racks on hire cars, bike racks on buses/coaches, commercial bicycle and luggage shuttle services to and from cycling routes/airports or other transport</li> <li>• secure bicycle parking or storage options</li> <li>• bicycle wash-down facilities.</li> </ul> <p>A specific service need is uphill transport to the beginning of downhill runs.</p> <p><i>This is provided variously by bus shuttle services (such as at Rotorua, New Zealand) or lifts (as in mountain bike parks utilising ski lift infrastructure at places such as Whistler, Thredbo in NSW and Queenstown in New Zealand).</i></p> <p>Bike shops have become an important part of mountain biking culture in many places. For example the local bike shop was the centre for development of trails at Melrose (South Australia) and operates as a centre for mountain bikers and a source of trail</p>	<p>All three existing bicycle shops at Alice Springs have expressed their strong support for MTB development in the region.</p> <p>High quality bike rental by <i>Outback Cycling</i> is currently offered at Alice Springs and Uluru.</p> <p>Darwin is well supported with several bike shops and one bike rental outlet.</p> <p>A lack of bike shops and services is a limiting factor in other centres, such as Tennant Creek and Katherine.</p>	<p>Development and strengthening of bike related support services will be required through cooperative efforts by industry, government and other stakeholders. Regional locations (such as Uluru, King’s Canyon) may require support to develop their capacity to provide bike-related support services.</p>

CRITERION	CHARACTERISTICS	CURRENT SITUATION	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS/ ISSUES
	information.		
<b>13. Quality cycling experience products and packages</b>	<p>A range of commercial mountain bike tours and services is important to attract non-expert mountain bikers to visit a mountain biking destination or undertake a riding experience while in a destination.</p> <p>Commercial products (guided tours, skill schools) also have a role in assisting mountain bikers to improve skills and undertake new experiences.</p>	There are a small number of MTB-specific tourism operators currently operating in Alice Springs.	<p>There is an opportunity for Alice Springs to position itself as a beginner/ non-expert friendly MTB destination, with terrain suitable for developing high quality introductory level trails. (Very few Australian MTB destinations have done this well to date).</p> <p>The Department of Sport and Recreation expressed specific interest in provision of MTB skills development infrastructure to support existing junior sports development programs. This could be offered across the NT to encourage greater participation.</p>
<b>14. Strong positioning as a cycling destination</b>	<p>A successful world class cycling destination has a distinct point of difference from its competitors that serves as the basis for attracting cycle visitors.</p> <p>This positioning (identified in marketing and promotion) needs to be delivered consistently across the destination in cycling opportunities, product quality, customer service standards and imagery.</p> <p>A signature cycling route or event can be the focus of a destination's positioning and assist in establishing it in the minds of potential visitors.</p>	<p>Development of positioning of MTB experiences in the NT and Alice Springs is at an early stage.</p> <p>There has been some promotion of the distinctiveness of mountain biking in Central Australia's iconic arid landscapes.</p>	<p>Potential positioning opportunities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Alice Springs as the only desert MTB destination in Australia /Southern Hemisphere.</i> There are numerous examples of very successful arid-zone MTB destinations in USA (such as Moab in Utah and Fruita in Colorado)</li> <li>• The unique Alice Springs culture, art &amp; community</li> <li>• the entire NT as an ideal destination during winter months in southern/eastern Australia.</li> </ul>
<b>15. Coordinated destination marketing and promotion</b>	<p>Cycling promotion needs to be integrated into a destination's broader marketing through collaboration with tourism organisations and tourism operators. That way cycling is presented as a clear option for destination visitors and awareness and collaboration among operators in offering cycling packages is</p>	Development of marketing and promotion of MTB experiences in the NT and Alice Springs is at an early stage.	Integration of MTB marketing into the broader regional tourism marketing is required. Key roles will need to be taken by TCA and TTE.

CRITERION	CHARACTERISTICS	CURRENT SITUATION	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS/ ISSUES
	<p>fostered. Examples include marketing by Visit Scotland and the Isle of Wight, UK.</p> <p>There should be consistency between cycling positioning and overall destination positioning. It may be possible to leverage the wider positioning and brand identity of a destination to attract cyclists.</p> <p><i>For example, cycling is part of a range of outdoor activities and festivals being promoted by the Isle of Wight to attract British families throughout the year.</i></p> <p>Strong online and social media promotion is desirable given that this source of holiday and recreation information is becoming increasingly popular in Australia and globally.</p> <p><i>Examples of successful coordination of mountain bike and general destination promotion and information of outdoor and adventure activities include Fruita Colorado (<a href="http://gofruita.com/play">gofruita.com/play</a>), Squamish, Canada (<a href="http://exploresquamish.com">exploresquamish.com</a>) and Visit Ruapehu, New Zealand (<a href="http://www.visitruapehu.com">www.visitruapehu.com</a>).</i></p>		

## APPENDIX D –IMBA Ride Centre potential

Achievement of accredited IMBA Ride Centre status is recognised among mountain bikers globally as an indication of the quality of mountain biking experiences in a destination. Ride Centre status is a strong advantage in promotion and marketing of a mountain biking location to attract visitors, events and sponsorship.

IMBA's Ride Centre designation program recognises and endorses mountain biking destinations throughout the world that offer the highest quality and standards in mountain biking experiences. There are 3 tiers of Ride Centre designation - Gold, Silver and Bronze, in descending order of stature. Mt Buller is currently Australia's only IMBA accredited Ride Centre with Bronze status, while in New Zealand, Rotorua and Nelson have achieved Gold accreditation and Taupo has achieved Silver status. Several other Australian mountain biking destinations are currently in the process of seeking IMBA Ride Centre accreditation.

An indicative assessment of Alice Springs as the NT mountain biking location with most potential for world class mountain biking has been conducted against the current IMBA Ride Centre Evaluation Criteria (Aug 2011 version)<sup>8</sup> is provided below. This assessment has been made for the purposes of this Master Plan and provides an indication of what measures Alice Springs needs to take to achieve Ride Centre accreditation – it is not a formal IMBA assessment.

IMBA's evaluation involves allocating a score out of 100 for a range of specific criteria divided into categories of *Trail Experience* (62 points available), *Services* (19 points), *Community Involvement* (8 points), *Tourism & Marketing* (6 points) and *Above & Beyond* (5 points). A score of 55 to 75 achieves Bronze accreditation; 76 to 89 achieves Silver accreditation; and 90 to 100 achieves Gold accreditation.

In its current state, Alice Springs was assessed against the evaluation criteria as follows:

A greater variety of trail types and difficulty levels is required to meet the requirements for a Bronze IMBA Ride Centre. Some of this could be met through:

Improvements in services (such as basic camping options and bike-friendly accommodation), community involvement and marketing of mountain biking at Alice Springs would also contribute towards meeting Ride Centre criteria.

Developing the Alice Springs trail network to a level commensurate with Gold Ride Centre accreditation would be a significantly larger-scale undertaking. The key constraint is the lack of opportunity for gravity-oriented riding experiences and associated services such as shuttle services. In terms of terrain, Mt Gillen to the immediate south-west of Alice Springs within the Alice Springs Desert Park is a potential opportunity that could be investigated to provide gravity-oriented riding experiences. It would require development of a variety of trails providing descents from the top of the ridgeline to the surrounding lowland terrain. There is an existing vehicle track that provides access to the communication towers on the Mt Gillen ridgeline which may facilitate a shuttle service to the top of the descent trails subject to approval from Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

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<sup>8</sup> Representatives from IMBA have informally advised that the IMBA Ride Centre program will be reviewed and updated during 2015/16 to change aspects of the trail network assessment and endorsement process. This is expected to be completed by mid 2016.

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS FOR ALICE SPRINGS	OPPORTUNITIES & GAPS IN ALICE SPRINGS
<b>TRAIL EXPERIENCE</b>					
<b>Trail Types</b>					
<b>Single-track - Easy</b>	Easy single-track trail for riders	Traditional single-track trail. Generally complies with IMBA Trail Rating guidelines. Minimum length 4.8km. Minimum contiguous length 3.2km.	1	<b>1</b>	<i>Existing green-circle trail (Ilentye) at the Telegraph Station meets the criterion, though not of the trail is true single-track.</i>
<b>Single-track - More Difficult</b>	More difficult single-track trail for riders	Traditional single-track trail. Generally complies with IMBA Trail Rating guidelines. Minimum length 9.7km. Minimum contiguous length 6.4km	1	<b>1</b>	<i>Existing blue-square trails at the Telegraph Station meets the criterion.</i>
<b>Single-track - very difficult</b>	Very difficult single-track trail for riders.	Traditional single-track trail. Generally complies with IMBA Trail Rating guidelines. Minimum length 9.7km. Minimum contiguous length 6.4km	1	<b>1</b>	<i>Existing single-track on the West Macs loop meets the criterion. The trail is complete but is yet to be formally opened.</i>
<b>Single-track - extremely difficult</b>	Extremely difficult single-track trail for riders.	Traditional single-track trail. Generally complies with IMBA Trail Rating guidelines. Minimum length 8km. Minimum contiguous length 6.4km.	1		<i>There is no double-diamond trail currently. The Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for this level of trail.</i>
<b>Bike-specific single-track - easy</b>	Easy purpose-built single-track trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB.	Purpose-built or modified single-track trail, the majority of which contains a high density of specific features to enhance the rider experience and provide challenge, such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops. Generally complies with IMBA Trail Rating guidelines. Minimum length 2.5km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1		<i>There is no purpose-built green-circle trail. Ample opportunities for provision of this level of trail exists across the Alice Springs network.</i>
<b>Bike-specific single-track - easy</b>	Easy purpose-built single-track trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB	Purpose-built or modified single-track trail, the majority of which contains a high density of specific features to enhance the rider experience and provide challenge, such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops. Generally complies with IMBA Trail Rating guidelines (points are cumulative). Minimum length 3.2km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1		<i>No purpose-built green-circle trail is currently provided. There are ample opportunities for provision across the Alice Springs network.</i>

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<b>Bike-specific single-track - more difficult</b>	More difficult purpose-built single-track trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB	Purpose-built or modified single-track trail, the majority of which contains a high density of specific features to enhance the rider experience and provide challenge, such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops. Generally complies with IMBA Trail Rating guidelines (points are cumulative). Minimum length 2.5km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1	<b>1</b>	<i>Some existing informal trails in the Alice Springs network would meet this criterion once formalised.</i>
<b>Bike-specific single-track - more difficult</b>	More difficult purpose-built single-track trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB	Purpose-built or modified single-track trail, the majority of which contains a high density of specific features to enhance the rider experience and provide challenge, such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops. Generally complies with IMBA Trail Rating guidelines. Minimum length 3.2km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1	<b>1</b>	<i>Some existing informal trails in the Alice Springs network would meet this criterion once formalised.</i>
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<b>Bike-specific single-track - extremely difficult</b>	Extremely difficult purpose-built single-track trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB	Purpose-built or modified single-track trail, the majority of which contains a high density of specific features to enhance the rider experience and provide challenge, such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops. Generally complies with IMBA Trail Rating guidelines. Minimum length 2.5km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1		<i>No double-diamond trail is currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>
<b>Bike-specific single-track - extremely difficult</b>	Extremely difficult purpose-built single-track trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB	Purpose-built or modified single-track trail, the majority of which contains a high density of specific features to enhance the rider experience and provide challenge, such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops. Generally complies with IMBA Trail Rating guidelines. Minimum length 3.2km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1		<i>No double-diamond trail is currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>
<b>Bike-specific gravity-oriented trail - easy</b>	Easy purpose-built gravity-oriented trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB	Purpose-built or modified trail that utilizes gravity to enhance the descending experience. The majority of the trail must contain a high density of bike-specific features such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops. Minimum length 2.5km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>

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<b>Bike-specific gravity-oriented trail - more difficult</b>	More difficult purpose-built gravity-oriented trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB	Purpose-built or modified trail that utilizes gravity to enhance the descending experience. The majority of the trail must contain a high density of bike-specific features such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops (points are cumulative). Minimum length 2.5km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>
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<b>Bike-specific gravity-oriented trail - more difficult</b>	More difficult purpose-built gravity-oriented trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB.	Purpose-built or modified trail that utilizes gravity to enhance the descending experience. The majority of the trail must contain a high density of bike-specific features such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops (points are cumulative). Minimum length 6.4km. Minimum contiguous length 4.8km.	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision. Distance criteria may not be achievable within the constraints of the terrain.</i>
<b>Bike-specific gravity-oriented trail - very difficult</b>	Very difficult purpose-built gravity-oriented trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB.	Purpose-built or modified trail that utilizes gravity to enhance the descending experience. The majority of the trail must contain a high density of bike-specific features such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops. Minimum length 2.5km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>

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<b>Bike-specific gravity-oriented trail - very difficult</b>	Very difficult purpose-built gravity-oriented trail that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB.	Purpose-built or modified trail that utilizes gravity to enhance the descending experience. The majority of the trail must contain a high density of bike-specific features such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops (points are cumulative). Minimum length 6.4km. Minimum contiguous length 4.8km.	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision. Distance criteria may not be achievable within the constraints of the terrain.</i>
<b>Bike-specific gravity-oriented trail - extremely difficult</b>	Extremely difficult purpose-built gravity-oriented trail for intermediate riders that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB.	Purpose-built or modified trail that utilizes gravity to enhance the descending experience. The majority of the trail must contain a high density of bike-specific features such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops. Minimum length 2.5km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>
<b>Bike-specific gravity-oriented trail - extremely difficult</b>	Extremely difficult purpose-built gravity-oriented trail for intermediate riders that maximises the fun and efficiency of riding a MTB.	Purpose-built or modified trail that utilizes gravity to enhance the descending experience. The majority of the trail must contain a high density of bike-specific features such as berms, rollers, consistently wide turn radii, technical features, rock gardens, jumps, drops (points are cumulative). Minimum length 4.8km. Minimum contiguous length 2.5km.	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>
<b>DJ trail/area - easy/more difficult</b>	Easy / more difficult dirt jump track/trail.		1		<i>Not currently provided. There are opportunities for provision within the Alice Springs network.</i>
<b>DJ trail/area - very/extremely difficult</b>	Very / extremely difficult dirt jump track/trail.		1		<i>Not currently provided. There are opportunities for provision within the Alice Springs network.</i>
<b>Pump track</b>	Public pump track is available.		1		<i>Not currently provided. There are opportunities for provision within the Alice Springs network.</i>

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS FOR ALICE SPRINGS	OPPORTUNITIES & GAPS IN ALICE SPRINGS
<b>Bike Park</b>	There is a bike park facility.	A bike park is defined as a distinct, identifiable area that contains at least 2 primary MTB-oriented trails or tracks. Can be free or fee-based.	3		<i>Not currently provided. Telegraph Station and Alice Springs Desert Park present opportunities.</i>
<b>Uplift options at bike park</b>	Bike park has options for uplift.	Uplift options can be either free or fee-based.	1		<i>Not currently available. The Management Track to communication towers at Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>
<b>Trail Qualities</b>					
<b>3 or more days of riding</b>	A cyclist can spend 3 or more days riding the trail system and enjoy a different ride each day.	Each ride does not necessarily need to be on completely different trails, but should provide a unique experience.	3	<b>1</b>	<i>Existing trail network (formal and informal) provides 2+ days of riding currently. Potential exists to upgrade and formalise the existing trail network combined with new trail development to meet this criterion.</i>
<b>Signs/wayfinding</b>	Signs, maps and markers allow persons unfamiliar with the trail system to navigate it with relative ease.		2	<b>0.5</b>	<i>Some signage is currently in place. The entire network needs to be properly sign-posted to meet this criterion.</i>
<b>Trailhead amenities</b>	Major trailheads contain some combination of parking areas, sign kiosks, bathrooms, changing areas, bike wash, drinking water.		2	<b>0.5</b>	<i>There is good trailhead at the Telegraph Station. Upgrades are required combined with additional trailheads to meet this criterion.</i>
<b>Skills Development Area</b>	Easy-level features (e.g. berms, rock-armouring, drops, rollers) that encourage learning		1		<i>Not currently provided. Planning is underway for development of a skills park</i>
<b>Scenic views</b>	Scenic views of the local community, natural beauty, or unique natural features.		1	<b>1</b>	<i>The existing (informal and formal) trail network provides several good view points. There are opportunities to increase scenic viewpoints with upgrades to the existing trail network.</i>

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS FOR ALICE SPRINGS	OPPORTUNITIES & GAPS IN ALICE SPRINGS
<b>Backcountry experience</b>	Opportunities to find a sense of solitude or a backcountry experience while riding.	The trail experience will result in a ride when fewer than 12 other users are encountered when further than 8km (by trail) from the trailhead.	2	1	<i>The existing West Macs Track could be characterised as a back-country experience currently. There are opportunities to increase provision of backcountry trail experiences at and near Alice Springs.</i>
<b>Descents &gt; 1.6km</b>	Single-track trail descent with average grade between 5-10% for at least 1.6km	Maximum sustained grade of 20% for no more than 0.8km	1		<i>The existing informal network may get close to meeting this criterion. With trail improvements and formalisation it is likely this criterion can be met.</i>
<b>Descents &gt; 4.8km</b>	Single-track trail descent with average grade between 5-10% for at least 4.8km	Maximum sustained grade of 20% for no more than 0.8km (points are cumulative)	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>
<b>Descents &gt; 8km</b>	Single-track trail descent with average grade between 5-10% for at least 8km	Maximum sustained grade of 20% for no more than 0.8km (points are cumulative)	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision. Distance criteria may not be achievable within the constraints of the terrain.</i>
<b>Long climb &gt; 1.6km</b>	Single-track trail ascent with minimum average grade of 7% for at least 1.6km.	Maximum sustained grade of 20% for no more than 0.8km	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>
<b>Long climb &gt; 4.8km</b>	Single-track trail ascent with minimum average grade of 7% for at least 4.8km.	Maximum sustained grade of 20% for no more than 0.8km (points are cumulative)	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision.</i>
<b>Long climb &gt; 8km</b>	Single-track trail ascent with minimum average grade of 7% for at least 8km.	Maximum sustained grade of 20% for no more than 0.8km (points are cumulative)	1		<i>Such a trail experience is not currently provided. Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for provision. Distance criteria may not be achievable within the constraints of the terrain.</i>

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS FOR ALICE SPRINGS	OPPORTUNITIES & GAPS IN ALICE SPRINGS
<b>Technical Climbs</b>	There exist trails used as ascending routes that possess technical climbs regularly featuring rocks, roots, steps, &/or other challenges.	Minimum length of 8km. Minimum contiguous length of 2.5km.	2		<i>Potential to develop long technical climbing trail(s) exists although distance criteria may not be achievable within the constraints of terrain.</i>
<b>Long-distance adventure</b>	There exist opportunities to do a long distance (65km) and possibly multi-day single-track tour within or as part of the trail system.		1	<b>1</b>	<i>By linking existing (formal and informal) trails this criterion can currently be met. Strong potential exists at and near Alice Springs to increase the scale and quality of long distance adventure trail experiences.</i>
<b>All-weather trails &gt; 4.8km</b>	There are at least 4.8km of trails that can sustainably withstand use during very wet or very dry periods	Trails can be engineered, improved, &/or possess soil types that make them durable.	1	<b>1</b>	<i>The criterion would be met with the upgrade and formalisation of the existing trail network.</i>
<b>All-weather trails &gt; 8km</b>	There exists at least 8km of trails that can sustainably withstand use during very wet or very dry periods	Trails can be engineered, improved, &/or possess soil types that make them durable (points are cumulative).	1	<b>1</b>	<i>The criterion would be met with the upgrade and formalisation of the existing trail network</i>
<b>Trailhead access by bike</b>	Ease of access by bicycle from lodging/camping to trailhead.	Factors to consider include: easy grades (5% or less), distance (less than 5km), presence of bike lane, path, trail or wide road shoulder, traffic volume on shared routes.	2	<b>1</b>	<i>Alice Springs has an existing network of bike-accessible paths and bike lanes. The town is mostly flat and centralised.</i>
<b>Shuttle/uplift options</b>	There are opportunities to shuttle or use uplift services to access trails.	Shuttle/uplift options must cover at least 90% of the vertical trails and allow access to 50% of the trail system. Includes established heli-shuttles.	3		<i>Not currently available. The Management Track to the communication towers at Alice Springs Desert Park presents an opportunity for uplift. There is also potential for shuttle services to remote parts of the network.</i>
<b>Riding season &gt; 6 months</b>	The riding season is typically 6 months or longer.	Assumes at least half the facilities to be open during a time when the ground is free of snow and the maximum average monthly heat index is <100°F.	1	<b>1</b>	<i>The optimal trail season is April to October (7 months). March and November can be considered reasonable. December to February should be considered marginal due to heat.</i>

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<b>Riding season &gt; 8 months</b>	The riding season is typically 8 months or longer.	Assumes at least half the facilities to be open during a time when the ground is free of snow and the maximum average monthly heat index is <100°F.	1	1	<i>See above. This is achievable at Alice Springs.</i>
<b>Riding season &gt; 10 months</b>	The riding season is typically 10 months or longer.	Assumes at least half the facilities to be open during a time when the ground is free of snow and the maximum average monthly heat index is <100°F.	1		
<b>Trail Experience Total</b>				<b>19</b>	
<b>SERVICES</b>					
<b>Retail</b>					
<b>Bike Shop - goods &amp; services</b>	Bike shops within community has/have a significant stock of MTB based merchandise and can service MTBs.		2	2	<i>There are currently 3 bike shops at Alice Springs each with a good range of MTBs and servicing ability. In addition the Trail Station rents bikes and can do basic repairs and maintenance.</i>
<b>MTB guide services / outfitter</b>	Availability of free or fee-based guide services.		1	1	<i>Trail Station currently provides guided rides. Outfitters/merchandise available.</i>
<b>MTB shuttle service</b>	There is a service that shuttles riders and their bikes to area trailheads.		1		<i>Not currently available. There is potential for provision once demand develops.</i>
<b>Bike rental</b>	Availability of MTB rental services.	Stock cannot be older than 3 years and must include mid-level full-suspension bikes sizes S-XL.	1	1	<i>Bike rentals available at Trail Station Café in accordance with criteria.</i>
<b>Shopping</b>	There are opportunities to shop for general merchandise.	Pharmacy, department store, hardware store, auto supply shop etc.	1	1	<i>Alice Springs is a well-serviced town with a good range and quality of goods and services available.</i>
<b>Lodging</b>					
<b>Primitive camping</b>	There are primitive camping locations within 8km of the trail system		1		<i>Primitive (i.e. basic) camping currently occurs informally around Alice Springs. Development of a dedicated basic campground would be desirable.</i>

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<b>Camping with potable water &amp; showers</b>	There are camping sites with potable water and hot showers within 8km of the trail system.		1	1	<i>Alice Springs has numerous campgrounds with facilities from unpowered tent sites to powered van sites and on-site caravans.</i>
<b>Camping with van/RV hook-up</b>	There are camping sites with van/RV hook-ups within 8km of the trail system.		1	1	
<b>Hotel/motel</b>	There are hotels/motels within 8km of the trail system.		1	1	<i>Alice Springs has an extensive range of hotel and motel accommodation at a variety of price points.</i>
<b>Bike-friendly lodging</b>	Hotels/motels/campgrounds have bike washes, secure bike storage, and/or allow bikes in rooms.	Total of at least 25% of available rooms bike-friendly.	1		<i>Alice Springs has hosted regular MTB events for many years so numerous accommodation providers are bike-friendly. While the 25% criterion may not yet be met there is good potential to increase bike-friendly accommodation in the future.</i>
<b>Food</b>					
<b>Quality/variety of restaurants</b>	There is a variety of eating establishments that feature different cuisines.	More than 6 different categories of restaurant (e.g. ethnic, food types).	2	2	<i>There is a good selection of restaurants, bars and eateries at Alice Springs.</i>
<b>Brew pub</b>	There is a brew pub		1	1	<i>Alice Springs has several pubs.</i>
<b>Coffee shop</b>	There is a café		1	1	<i>Alice Springs has several cafes.</i>
<b>Grocery store</b>	There is a grocery store		1	1	<i>Alice Springs has numerous grocery stores.</i>
<b>Natural/organic food</b>	It is possible to purchase natural/organic food.		1	1	<i>Alice Springs has a wholefoods store offering organic produce and there are several vegetarian restaurants.</i>
<b>Other</b>					

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS FOR ALICE SPRINGS	OPPORTUNITIES & GAPS IN ALICE SPRINGS
<b>Airport</b>	There is an airport within 1 hour by public or private transportation.	Airport needs to have daily commercial jet service no further than 1 hour away.	1	1	<i>Alice Springs has an airport within 15 minutes of the town providing daily direct connections to most Australian capital cities</i>
<b>Medical services/EMS</b>	There exists a hospital emergency room or clinic within 40 miles of trail system, or backcountry EMS providers are established in the area.	EMS providers can be trained land management agency staff, organised volunteer SAR teams, etc. Personnel need to be familiar with the trail system and have an understanding of access points and evacuation routes.	1	1	<i>Alice Springs has excellent medical facilities and a hospital with emergency services.</i>
<b>Services Total</b>				<b>16</b>	
<b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>					
<b>MTB Patrol/ ambassadors</b>	Trail system is served by bike patrol or ambassadors (volunteer or professional) with regularly scheduled patrols.	Patrols need to occur at least once during the weekend and once during the week. Patrols need to be accredited through IMBA, other recognised organisation, or the land management agency.	1		<i>MTB patrols do not currently occur at Alice Springs on a formal basis. Alice Springs has an existing MTB club and community with an interest in the trails. There is potential to establish a MTB patrol program in the future.</i>
<b>Group rides</b>	There are regularly scheduled group rides.	The rides can be hosted by the local community, bike shop, guide service, or other entity. Rides are free or available for a minimal fee.	1	1	<i>Informal group rides occur regularly, with potential to offer them on a more formalised basis should demand arise.</i>
<b>MTB -related events</b>	Local community or other entity hosts or helps with races, festivals, trail work, or other bike-related social activities (e.g. fundraisers).		2	2	<i>There are 2 annual MTB events - a long-established multi-day competitive stage race and a recreation-oriented MTB festival more recently established by the local club.</i>

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS FOR ALICE SPRINGS	OPPORTUNITIES & GAPS IN ALICE SPRINGS
<b>Support</b>	The Ride Centre's development and maintenance are supported by government entities, businesses, land managers/owners, stakeholders, and the general community.	Can be shown through letters of support, MOUs, adopted trail plans, grants etc. Can also be shown with strong advocacy support.	2	2	<i>Strong support for development of MTB opportunities at Alice Springs is evidenced by the development of this Master Plan and the well-established and strong MTB community in Alice Springs.</i>
<b>Land manager/owner support</b>	Legal instrument (e.g. adopted trail plan, contract, MOU) supports mountain-biking.		2	1	<i>Support from PWCNT specifically and the NT Government broadly. The Central Land Council has indicated in-principal support. Stronger legal instruments are likely to develop in the future as MTB opportunities are further developed.</i>
<b>Community Involvement Total</b>				<b>6</b>	
<b>TOURISM AND MARKETING</b>					
<b>Recreational variety</b>	There are a variety of recreational opportunities within 1 hour by public or private transportation.	Additional recreational activities are important to provide a diverse experience. Activities include rock-climbing/abseiling, skiing/boardng, mountaineering, paddling, hiking, running, and surfing.	2	1	<i>Alice Springs is seeking to establish itself as an adventure activity destination. Other well-established recreation opportunities in the area include hiking, camel-trekking, 4WDing, scenic flights, quad-biking.</i>
<b>Marketing presence</b>	Easily accessible mediums (e.g. website) used for marketing the trail system.	Information should include details about where to ride, where to stay, where to eat, local MTB organisation, Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau.	2	1	<i>A well-established Alice Springs tourism marketing program already exists. Trails and MTBing could be better integrated into the existing program or a separate dedicated MTB tourism web portal and marketing program established.</i>
<b>Local marketing group</b>	There exists a local community group that has made a commitment to promoting and marketing the Ride Centre.	Group can be comprised of Chamber of Commerce, visitors' council, government agencies, land manager/owner, marketing alliance.	2	2	<i>There is strong support from Tourism NT and TCA for marketing Alice Springs as a MTB destination.</i>

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS FOR ALICE SPRINGS	OPPORTUNITIES & GAPS IN ALICE SPRINGS
<b>Tourism &amp; Marketing Total</b>				<b>4</b>	
<b>ABOVE &amp; BEYOND</b>					
<b>Special conditions</b>	There are unique and special conditions present within the community and trails that are valuable to an IMBA Ride Centre.	Applicants should describe special conditions for criteria not mentioned above.	5	<b>2</b>	<i>Alice Springs already has a reputation within Australia as a MTB destination. Its key point of difference is being the only desert MTB destination in Australia. It is also one of the easiest trail destinations in Australia to access having a major well-connected airport within easy riding distance of the trailhead.</i>
<b>Above &amp; Beyond Total</b>				<b>2</b>	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				<b>47</b>	

# APPENDIX E – Sustainable MTB Trail Development Approach for Central Australia

The following discussion sets out recommended approaches for sustainable mountain bike trail design, construction, monitoring and maintenance for the Central Australian environment.

A sustainable trail:

- sits lightly on the landscape and does not adversely impact the ecosystem
- meets the needs of its users
- requires minimal maintenance
- minimises the likelihood of conflict occurring between different users and user groups
- facilitates minimal impact human visitation into natural landscapes.

Achieving trail sustainability in the arid environment of Central Australia, or indeed anywhere, is best regarded as a 'process' rather than a project within itself.

A holistic approach to trail development, in which the ethos of sustainability is integrated into every stage of trail development and management, from design and planning to construction and maintenance, is key to achieving sustainable trails. Monitoring of trails over the medium to long term, and implementing appropriate management responses to changes and issues as they arise, are also critical components of sustainable trail development.

There is no one-size-fits-all formula for trail sustainability. The sustainability of any trail development and management process will be shaped, constrained and influenced by a wide range of factors, such as type of landscape (forest, desert, alpine), integrity of landscape (undisturbed/intact or disturbed/highly-modified), and current and future volume and intensity of recreation activity. The IMBA trail development guidelines are widely regarded as world's best practice approach to sustainable recreational trail development, but IMBA deliberately refer to and promote them as a set of *guidelines* only, in recognition of the importance of adapting and tailoring trail development and management approaches to meet local needs and circumstances.

It is strongly recommended that the broad approach to trail development and management at Alice Springs and Central Australia is approached in accordance with the IMBA guidelines, with the following suggested adaptations specific to the arid environment of Central Australia given due consideration.

## Trail Network Planning

Consideration should be given to what is an optimal trail network size. A nominal figure of approximately 100km was put forward for Alice Springs during the consultation phase of developing this Master Plan. It may seem reasonable to assume that overall resource requirements to maintain a trail network are directly proportional to the size of the network – that is, the larger the network the more maintenance is required. However, the planning approach for Alice Springs should recognise the relatively modest sustainable carrying capacity of trails in arid environments. By spreading trail users out over a larger network, and thereby reducing intensity of use, the overall ecological footprint will be reduced. Anecdotally this latter approach has been applied in arid and semi-arid zone mountain biking trail destinations in the South West states of the USA (such as Moab, Utah and Fruita, Colorado) where the size of the trail networks is large relative to the number of users, compared to other North American mountain bike destinations.

Formalisation of the existing Alice Springs mountain bike trail network would provide a network of approximately 86km. Future development will extend the trail network to over 100km - for example, though addition of dedicated purpose-built entry-level single-track, enhanced back-country riding experiences and some potential gravity-oriented trails.

A monitoring program should be established as soon as possible to count trail user numbers and to assess the condition of the trail network over time. With this information an understanding of what carrying capacity is sustainable can start to be gleaned to inform an appropriate growth strategy for the trail network in the longer term, serving local community and tourism interests.

## Trail Design

Given the general fragility of Central Australian soils it is recommended to interpret and apply the IMBA guidelines relatively conservatively. Trail gradients should diligently observe the Half Rule, and particular attention should be paid to trail flow which is critical for minimising user-caused erosion.

Tread-hardening however will be the key approach to ensuring that Central Australian trails are erosion-resistant and robust. The most reliable method of tread-hardening is stone armouring. While the per metre cost of stone armouring is typically quite expensive, it is unquestionably the most reliable technique for providing an erosion-resistant tread capable of hosting increasing numbers of users in the long-term. Extensive use of stone armour will increase short-term costs but deliver value-for-money in the long term through minimal or even zero maintenance requirements. Wherever possible trail armouring should be done with local natural stone to ensure the aesthetics of the trail are compatible with the surrounding landscape.

During the consultation phase for this Master Plan it was suggested that soil stabilisers or other treatments could be used for tread-hardening. This suggestion is contrary to the best-practice approach that the use of imported and manufactured materials should be minimised in natural surface trail development, particularly where local natural alternatives are available. Stone armouring is recommended as the preferred approach, but some experimentation into use of other treatments should be encouraged as it may provide some cost-effective solutions suitable for particular local circumstances and conditions.

A striking feature of the Central Australian landscape is the abundance of exposed natural rock. Aligning trails directly over bedrock is an ideal way to easily achieve a very sustainable trail surface and create a distinctive style of trail and riding experience. Natural rock surface trails are a signature feature of some world-class mountain bike destinations (Moab, Utah being perhaps the most famous) and there are few places in Australia that are well-known and characterised by this type of riding experience. It is strongly recommended that any new trail development at Alice Springs should maximise use of exposed natural rock as it is probably the single easiest way to achieve robust, erosion-resistant trails and add a distinct and unique characteristic to the riding experience.

## Trail Construction

The existing Alice Springs trail network has a definitive 'minimalistic' character and construction style. Within the local mountain biking community there is a clear perception that the minimalistic style of Alice Springs trails is a defining feature of the overall Central Australia riding experience and a key point of difference with other trail networks. Several local trail-builders, riders and PWCNT staff have also attested to the sustainability benefits of minimalistic construction compared to those trail sections developed with 'heavier' construction methods involving greater soil disturbance. For these reasons the clear desire within the local community that future trail upgrades and developments should retain the minimalistic character is fully supported.

This will become an important consideration for local project managers on trail development projects. It has become the norm in professional trail building in Australia to use machines such as mini-excavators and skid-steers for trail construction, but project briefs can be prepared to mandate minimalistic construction techniques in which use of machinery is kept to a minimum and the desired character of the trail is defined. Tread compaction using imported water and rollers or plate compactors could also be mandated as a project requirement in order to maximise the likelihood of achieving a quality hardened tread surface.

## Management models

### *Trail Maintenance and Day-to-Day Management*

A significant determinant of trail sustainability will be how the network is managed and maintained as well as how it is designed and built. An actively managed trail monitoring and maintenance program that combines dedicated professional resources with community input is recommended. PWCNT has indicated its support for providing some staff resources to on-going management and maintenance of the trail network.

There is much goodwill and capability within the local mountain biking community for supporting management of the trail network, including past and current informal and unstructured contributions to trail development and maintenance. This community contribution will be a critical ingredient in managing the trail network successfully in future. A key challenge will be in how best to formalise the community's role in managing the trail network and the relationship with land management agencies.

Local mountain bikers and clubs are partners in many mountain biking destinations, making significant contributions to trail management and maintenance.

### **Trail Monitoring**

The two key metrics in trail monitoring are User Numbers and Trail Condition.

To monitor user numbers, Australian land managers are increasingly utilising commercially available electronic counters such as the TrafX MTB counter (<https://www.trafx.net>) and the Island Research Traker-Count (<http://www.islandresearch.com.au>). Products such as these provide land managers with a relatively simple and reliable means of monitoring user numbers on specific trails allowing trends in trail user rates and behaviour to be better understood.

Photo-point monitoring is a relatively simple and useful approach to monitoring trail condition. Trail audits were undertaken on the Telegraph Station in 2013 and Westside trails in 2014 that have generated an extensive base-line photo-point dataset which is held by PWCNT. This could form the basis for an on-going trail condition monitoring regime that can be replicated across the trail network as it is formalised and expanded. More rigorous monitoring techniques such as soil movement tests could be adopted as required although such monitoring requires higher levels of resourcing to undertake.

### **CASE STUDY – BEST PRACTISE MANAGEMENT: MAKARA PEAK MTB PARK**

Makara Peak MTB Park, which is located just outside Wellington, New Zealand, is a 250 hectare reserve with a trail network of over 40km. More than 80,000 visits are made to the park annually by mountain bikers of all ages and abilities as well as hikers and runners (who constitute around 30% of visits).

The park is situated on Wellington City Council land and managed under a I partnership between the Council and a pro-active membership-based community organisation known as Makara Peak MTB Park Supporters. The group contributes more than 4,500 volunteer hours annually to park projects including trail maintenance and development and conservation work. Since inception in 1998 the Makara Peak Supporters have developed more than 40kms of predominantly hand-built single-track, planted over 35,000 native plant seedlings and contributed to pest plant and animal control, waterway restoration and bushfire risk reduction activities.

The group is also very active in fundraising to support the park through both donations and grants. They host events including corporate work parties, and promote the park and its use through their website, social media platforms and regular newsletters.

The park has received numerous awards, including the Wellington Airport Regional Community Awards 2014 and NZ Recreation Association 'Most Outstanding Park' 2010.

*Source: [www.makarapeak.org](http://www.makarapeak.org)*

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