

Gil Baxter

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Legislative Council Government
Administration Committee B
North-East Railway Corridor Inquiry

There is a unique and wonderful opportunity to enhance tourism in Tasmania by restoring the existing rail line from Launceston to Scottsdale and using it as a tourist line. The popularity of the Strahn tourist train and other tourist lines such as Puffing Billy show that tourist trains can be successful and stimulate the local economy.

The tourist industry relies typically on affluent members of society. Older people and retirees constitute a large section of this group. Train travel can be enjoyed by people of all ages and physical abilities. Bike riding, on the other hand, is difficult and not that many older people participate in this activity.

When I first visited Tasmania in 2004 I went on a special 'wine train' from Launceston up to Lalla. Beautiful views of the Tamar Valley and lovely mountain scenery. We enjoyed a luncheon and wine tasting at one of the local wineries in Lalla. It was one of the highlights of our trip!

The proposal to tear up the railroad line and replace it with a bike path will not bring benefits to the local economy as claimed by advocates for the line removal. There are just not that many bike tourists! Local inns, restaurants and B&B's would not benefit to any great degree catering to them as many bike tourists bring their camping and bedding equipment with them.

Also, the proposed Launceston-Scottsdale bike route is long and difficult with little infrastructure along the way to accommodate bike tourists. Only those physically fit would consider the route.

The mountain bike experience is totally different from the bike touring experience. Mountain bikers enjoy the challenges of single track trails such as those at Derby. They are apt to drive to a trail area, spend the night, eat at local restaurants and then ride the trails. Bike tourists prefer paved relatively flat routes with campsites along the way. I know! I've done bike touring and I am an avid mountain biker.

The government has an opportunity to preserve and enhance this iconic railroad infrastructure. Doing so will provide economic benefits now and in the future. Train travel is enjoyed by many people of all ages and physical abilities and offers the tourist a unique and enjoyable experience. Tearing up the rail line and replacing it with a bike path to accommodate a small number of bike tourists simply does not make sense.

Thank you, Gil Baxter

