

Ms. Natasha Exel,
Inquiry Secretary,
Legislative Council,
Parliament House HOBART, TAS 7000

SUBMISSION TO:
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE 'B'
NORTH-EAST RAILWAY CORRIDOR ENQUIRY

Dear Honourable Members,

Disclaimer.

While I am a member of the Launceston and North Eastern Railway board, other than the historical facts and figures, this document is all my opinion and mine only. I am speaking as an individual and not as a face of the Launceston and North Eastern Railway.

Due to overwhelming amounts of controversy surrounding the North East Rail corridor debate, I think it is needed that we take a step back and go back to basics when talking about the risks involved with each proposal. While many are looking at it from a financial standpoint, I believe that little has been said about the physical risks, gambles, and possible consequences that could come about if the North East Rail Trail is constructed.

The first issue I believe doesn't have enough attention paid towards it is the irreversible process that is rail trail construction. If the rail trail is constructed, then it will remove all rail infrastructure from the corridor. The existing infrastructure, despite being in need of repair, is still worth millions of dollars. Replacing this infrastructure is something that, if was needed, would cost many times more than what it would to upgrade the existing infrastructure. This, unfortunately, means that any infrastructure that gets removed, will likely never be replaced. All of this means that if the North East Recreation Trail is constructed, there isn't a way to turn back the clock, no matter if it succeeds or not. However, on the other side of things, the Launceston and North Eastern Railway (L&NER) does not have such risks.

If the L&NER proposal goes ahead, it does not involve removing infrastructure from the corridor in any way. It only involves clearing the corridor (something the North East Recreation Trail would need to do anyways,) and upgrading the Railway track. Due to this, in the highly unlikely situation where the L&NER does run into financial troubles and has to cease operation, the corridor remains open for future development. This means that if someone, for example, wanted to run a "Railtrack Riders" style operation, this would be possible. However, if the rail infrastructure gets removed by the North East Recreation Trail, this sort of operation can not happen.

Even in a 'worst case scenario' where the L&NER cease operation. The rail corridor is, in reality, back where it started, a disused line.

It is important to note however that this sort of situation is highly, highly unlikely and is truly a 'worst case scenario.' But it does highlight the risk associated with the North East Recreation Trail, and the irreversible consequences it's construction could have.

If the North East Recreation Trail is to go forward, it should only be done once tourist rail has been given a chance to succeed, and rail removal should only be done if the L&NER fails in its objective. I, personally, see very little risk if it is done this way. The L&NER need a chance to prove that they can run a railway. Five or ten years of successful running should then grant them the opportunity to expand and be given the entirety, or most of, the line. During this time period the remainder of the line cannot be removed. After this period of time, if the Railway is proved as not viable, then, Recreation Trail construction can begin.

I would love to see the rail line reinstated between Launceston and Scottsdale, being a young member of the heritage rail community has given me so much experience. I believe that the L&NER can unite people of all ages, abilities and social statuses. Being the youngest member of the L&NER board, age 17, I have learned so much and I believe this opportunity should be available to all whom are like me.

Finally, I would like to thank the Honourable Members for this chance to give my input to this much needed inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Harrison Gregg

Launceston and North Eastern Railway board member.