



Final Report

*Community and stakeholder consultation on
potential road upgrade options to Turtons
Track, Otway Ranges.*



(December 2005)

Regional Innovation

**Department of
Sustainability and
Environment**

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Executive Summary

Turtons Track extends westerly from the Apollo Bay–Forrest Rd towards Beech Forest, traversing cool temperate rainforest and wet forest ecosystems, which are key natural attractions in the Otways. Turtons Track is presently an unsealed two-way route. It is subject to landslips, which can close the track for extended periods. The track condition creates road safety concerns and limits the use of the track for touring in the Otways.

The Tourism Plan for Public Land in the Otway Hinterland (2005) identified the possibility of developing an iconic tourist drive in the Otways, as part of the Victorian Government's *New Future for the Otways Tourism Initiative*. The initiative responds to the cessation of logging on public land in the Otways by 2008 and the establishment of the Great Otway National Park and Otway Forest Park. Touring is identified as a core tourism activity along the Great Ocean Road and in the Otways hinterland, and the development of a marketable iconic tourist drive requires the upgrading of Turtons Track.

Suggestions regarding the possible upgrading of Turtons Track are not new, in fact they have been in circulation for many decades. The Department of Sustainability and Environment, with VicRoads, is now undertaking an assessment of Turtons Track upgrade options. One part of this assessment has involved understanding the views of local people, organisations, groups and other interested stakeholders regarding the upgrade options for Turtons Track.

Extensive consultation has been undertaken to determine whether there is an upgrade option for Turtons Track that attracts broad community and stakeholder support. Four options have been canvassed through the consultation process. The options are (1) Retain the status quo-do nothing other than some drainage improvements (2) Seal the track as a 4-metre one-way route (3) Seal the track as a two-way 5-metre route; and (4) Seal the track as a 6-metre two way route.

The consultation has borne out broad support for option 3 (5-metre sealed two-way option for light vehicles) based on improved touring options and economic benefits, greater safety for users, improved road stability, continuity of track access, reduced maintenance, and environmental benefits resulting from less downhill land slips and less dust. With this support came a number of overarching issues including retention of the intimate driving/viewing experience afforded by Turtons Track, creation of a low speed driving environment, maintaining the vegetation canopy as part of the experience, minimizing vegetation loss as a result of any widening works through using best practice techniques and construction methods, and generally honouring the unique natural environment through which Turtons Track passes and the pleasure this environment affords people travelling on Turtons Track.

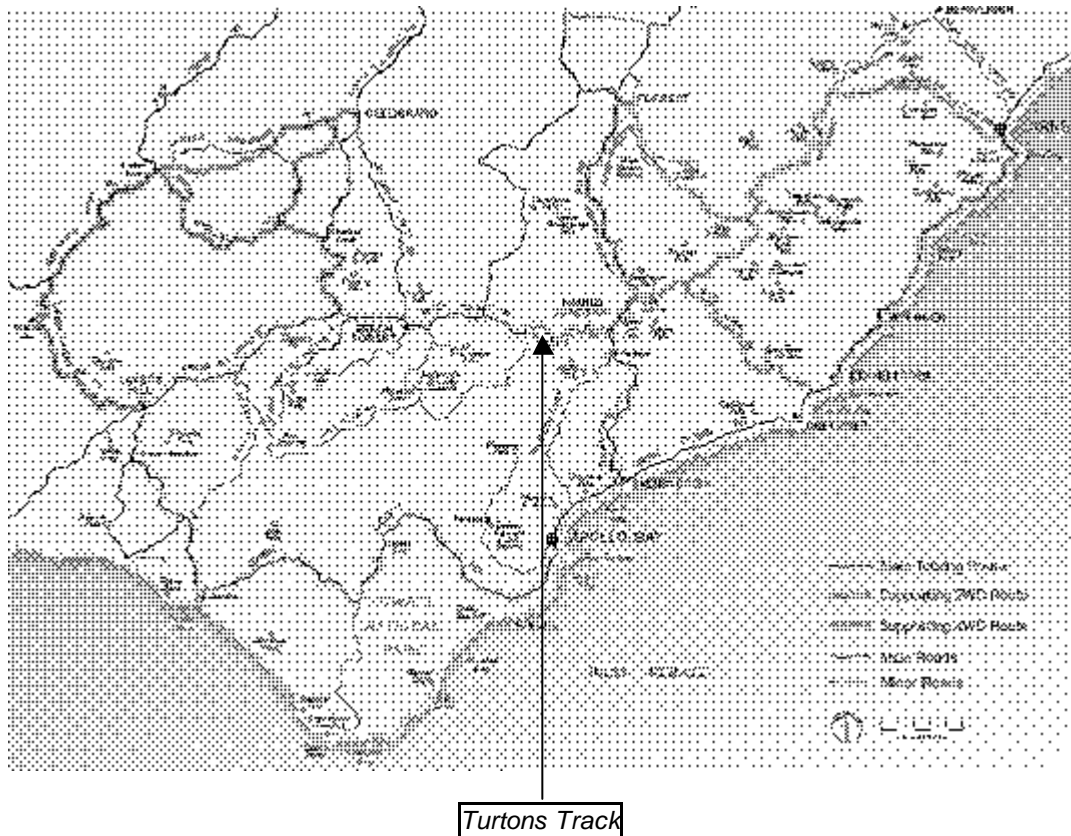
1. Background

The Tourism Plan for Public Land in the Otway Hinterland (2005) identified the possibility of developing an iconic tourist drive in the Otways. This has been amplified in other strategies and reports, including the Colac Otway Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.

Touring is a core tourism activity along the Great Ocean Road and in the Otways hinterland. The development of an iconic tourist drive requires the upgrading of Turtons Track. The tourism rationale of the tourist drive involves enhancing the tourism product through providing a safe, accessible and picturesque route that will increase the length of time visitors spend in the Otways and the amount of money they spend at other attractions and on accommodation, eating and hospitality. The iconic tourist drive aims to provide a tourism experience not presently available. The establishment of the tourist drive is consistent with more active promotion of tourism opportunities in the Otways hinterland region through the New Future for the Otways initiative.

The development of the iconic tourist drive would require upgrading of the unsealed length of Turtons Track (approximately 12 kilometres) and a small portion of the Beech Forest Rd. Turtons Track starts in the east at the Apollo Bay–Forrest Rd and extends westerly towards Beech Forest.

Touring Route Map and Turtons Track



Source: *The Tourism Plan for Public Land in the Otway Hinterland (2005)*

The further development of tourism in the Otways is part of the Victorian Government's *New Future for the Otways Tourism Initiative*. The initiative has its genesis in the Victorian Government decision to establish the Great Otway National Park and phase out commercial timber harvesting on public land in the Otways by 2008. The *Tourism Plan for Public Land in the Otway Hinterland (2005)*, which was prepared for The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) to guide the allocation of tourism funding under the *New Future for the Otways Tourism Initiative*, identified:

- ⇒ *The core tourism experience on public land depends on roads and tracks provided and maintained by the public sector. The Otways lack a suitable "flagship" tourist drive and there is a need for consolidation of the drive tour experience and the supporting road network.*
- ⇒ *Driving and touring are core experiences in the Otways, it is a natural extension to the Great Ocean Road (GOR) experience, it is easy to market and it is the most accessible way to experience the tourism offerings of the Otways in a time and cost effective manner.*
- ⇒ *Drives work best as loops which link nature based experiences, food and beverage stops and accommodation.*
- ⇒ *A priority strategy is to develop one main touring route (that includes Turtons Track). The objective is to condense the visitor experience into areas of highest appeal, consolidate the number of tracks and roads in use, and incorporate "spending points".*

Turtons Track winds its way through cool temperate rainforest and wet forest ecosystems. These are important natural attractions in the Otways. Turtons Track is presently unsealed and suffers from poor drainage. It is subject to landslips, which close the Track. In February 2005 there were approximately 30 landslips causing the track to be closed for a number of months. Local people use Turtons Track to travel within parts of the Otways.

Given these matters, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, with VicRoads, is undertaking an assessment of the upgrade options for Turtons Track and the implication of any upgrade works. A component of this assessment involves understanding the views and preferences of local people, organisation, groups and other interested stakeholders regarding the upgrade options for Turtons Track.

2. Community and stakeholder consultation on potential road upgrade options to Turtons Track, Otway Ranges.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment engaged Regional Innovation to undertake consultation with communities in the proximity of Turtons Track, environment, tourism and business groups and other groups and organisations with an interest in Turtons Track and the areas surrounding Turtons Track (the Community Consultation

Project). The purpose of the Community Consultancy Project is to explore and identify the various views and preferences regarding the potential upgrade of Turtons Track as part of an iconic tourist drive. This Report to DSE identifies the option that best meets the aspirations, and accounts for the views, of those people and groups which have participated in the consultation process. The consultation has focused on four options, which in general terms are:

1. *The status quo option whereby no substantive work is undertaken (other than drainage works) with Turtons Track remaining a two way unsealed road*
2. *Making Turtons Track a one-way sealed road for light vehicles#*
3. *Making Turtons Track a two-way sealed track with a 5 (five) metre pavement width for light vehicles*
4. *Making Turtons Track a two-way sealed track with a 6 (six) metre pavement width for light vehicles*

#(Light vehicles include car, campervans and motorbikes but exclude trucks, caravans or commercial vehicles)

This Report is part of the work that will inform Government decision-making on any future upgrade of Turtons Track, and the possible resource allocation should it be decided to upgrade Turtons Track.

This Community Consultation Project drew together, in a Discussion Paper, past and current reports and strategies that relate to Turtons Track. The Discussion Paper was used to promote informed discussions on upgrade options for Turtons Track. The Discussion Paper is attached to this Report as Attachment One. The past and current reports summarized in the Discussion Paper include:

- ⇒ *VicRoads Turtons Track Upgrade Investigation 2005*
- ⇒ *DSE Tourism Plan for Public Land in the Otway Hinterland January 2005*
- ⇒ *Great Ocean Road Region Land Use and Transport Strategy 2004*
- ⇒ *Tourism Victoria Great Ocean Road Tourism Development Plan 2004 – 2007*
- ⇒ *Geelong Otway Tourism Strategic Business Plan 2003 – 2007*
- ⇒ *VicRoads Turtons Track Tourism Strategy Issues Paper 2005*
- ⇒ *Environmental Assessment of Potential Road Upgrade to Turtons Track 2005*
- ⇒ *Turtons Track Cultural Heritage Assessment 2005*
- ⇒ *Economic Evaluation of Turtons Track Upgrade Options 2005 (Preliminary findings)*

This Community Consultation Project involved various formal activities supported by broad communication and engagement with groups and individuals with an interest in the Otways and Turtons Track.

The formal activities involved:

- ⇒ *Preparation of the Discussion Paper drawing together the key issues and findings from other reports and strategies referred to above.*
- ⇒ *Preparation of a brief Turtons Track Options Table (attached to this Report as Attachment Two).*
- ⇒ *Preparation of a Draft Report on the upgrade options for Turtons Track, which was discussed at the second round of Community Meetings (see below).*
- ⇒ *Contact by telephone with representatives of local community groups and chambers of commerce, environmental groups, tourism groups, agencies with an interest in the Otways in and around Turtons Track*
- ⇒ *Hosting initial community meetings at Beech Forest, Forrest and Apollo Bay on 7, 8 and 9 November 2005 to review the issues and options as described in the Discussion Paper and the Turtons Track Options Table.*
- ⇒ *Hosting a second round of community meetings in Beech Forest, Forrest and Apollo Bay on 4, 5 and 6 December 2005 to review the Draft Report*
- ⇒ *Undertaking follow up contact with various people/groups who were unable to attend the community meetings and who expressed an interest in involvement in the Community Consultation Project.*

Communication and engagement was undertaken through a number of means to promote knowledge of the project and to encourage active involvement. These activities included:

- *Initial telephone contact with key groups and organisations*
- *Email and mail correspondence (to individuals, agencies and groups)*
- *Advertisements in the Colac Herald, the Otway Light, the Forrest Newsletter and the Apollo Bay News Sheet*
- *Follow up contact*
- *Public notices at Forrest and Beech Forest*

Direct contact (telephone, email, in-person) was made with:

- ⇒ *Environmental Groups* including Victorian National Parks Association, Otway Ranges Environmental Network, Geelong Environment Council, Otway Conservation Council
- ⇒ *Tourism Groups* including Geelong Otway Tourism, Tourism Alliance, Otway Tourism, Otway Scenic Circle Association, Great Ocean Road Marketing, Otway Coast Tourism, Otway Hinterland Tourism Association and Visitor Information Centres at Colac, Lorne, Port Campbell and Apollo Bay
- ⇒ *Township Groups and Chambers of Commerce* including Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Beech Forest Progress Association, Forrest and District Community Group, Gellibrand / Kawarren Progress Association, Lavers Hill Progress Association, Kennett River Association, Skenes Creek Progress Association, Wye River Progress Association, Swan Marsh Community and Neighbourhood Association and Otway Forum

- ⇒ *Agencies and Instrumentalities* including Barwon Water, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Colac Otway Shire, Surf Coast Shire, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, VicRoads, Tourism Victoria and Framlingham Aboriginal Trust
- ⇒ *Commercial tour operators and other interested people*

Regional Innovation contact numbers were provided to encourage people to make contact and to access the Discussion Paper before the initial Community Meetings, and the Draft Report before the second round Community Meetings. The Discussion Paper was circulated electronically (and in hard copy upon request) to people before the initial Community Meetings and made available in hard copy at public premises in Apollo Bay, Beech Forest, Colac and Forrest. The Draft Report was similarly circulated prior to the second round of Community Meetings.

At the initial Community Meetings the Discussion Paper and the Turtons Track Options Table were used as the basis for consideration of the future upgrade options for Turtons Track. The options were considered in the order presented in the Turtons Track Options Table. Consultation has been undertaken outside the Community Meetings with interested people and groups who could not attend the initial or second round Community Meetings.

Following is a summary of the discussions and directions from the consultation, with identification of the most favoured upgrade options for Turtons Track.

3. Community meetings and other consultation

The following consultation summary is arranged in the Turtons Track option sequence referred to above, covering four options. Under each option is a table that provides the information from the Turtons Track Options Table, which was provided to people at the Community Meetings. A fifth option was canvassed in the Discussion Paper but was not discussed at the Community Meetings. This options provided for an 8.8 metre two-way sealed road capable of taking heavy vehicles. This option was included in the Discussion Paper only as a point of comparative analysis/reference for the other options.

3.1 General Comments

Costs of Options

There was little discussion regarding the capital cost of the options. Participants were advised that cost estimates originated from consultants engaged by VicRoads. There was broad support for reducing ongoing maintenance costs of Turtons Track. In the following discussion summary there is no further reference to the cost aspect of the options.

Capacity of Turtons Track

There was broad support for Turtons Track providing low speed travel for light vehicles only. Discussions centred on Turtons Track being (1) part of an iconic tourist drive and (2) a local road, with people driving at a speed that enables visitors to admire the forest environments within a safe driving environment. A precise travel speed was not fixed upon, however there was broad agreement that the travel speed reflect the iconic nature of the drive. Vehicle speed in the 20-40km range was proposed.

Economic Impacts

It was broadly accepted that the sealing of Turtons Track would:

- Enable marketing of the tourist drive as an iconic touring route;
- Overcome the restrictions on hire car use, and as a result encourage greater tourism use; and
- Increase safety, which would encourage greater use of the track.

It was also broadly accepted that improving drainage along Turtons Track would reduce landslips, increase certainty of access to Turtons Track and increase the capacity to effectively market the iconic tourist drive.

Environment

It was broadly accepted that:

- Turtons Track traverses high quality Wet Forest and Cool Temperate Rainforest Environments;
- That the Cool Temperate Rainforest is listed as threatened in Victoria and vulnerable in the Otways;
- There are a number of rare vegetation species within the forest environments;
- That vegetation loss as a result of any works resulting from any road widening should be kept to a minimum;
- Road works should be undertaken in a manner to minimize environmental impacts during (and post) upgrade works being undertaken;
- Visual obtrusions must be kept to a bare minimum along the track, particularly road barriers, guard rails etc which impact negatively on the ambience and intimacy of the drive.
- The vegetation provides high quality habitat;
- Continuing landslips create a threat to vegetation and water quality; and
- A detailed environmental assessment be completed before any upgrade works are undertaken and that upgrade works be undertaken within the framework of an environmental management plan for the Turtons Track environs.

Local Impacts

There were a number of common local impacts communicated during consultation. The major issue was the desire to improve local business opportunities through increasing visitor length of stay and yield and increasing the number of visitors in the Otways hinterland. There was a broadly held view that upgrading Turtons Track to a sealed two-way low speed environment for light vehicles would be beneficial for smaller settlements and businesses in the Otways. A local negative impact identified as a result of increased traffic involves safety hazards for cyclists and pedestrians because of increased traffic on narrow roads in the towns, which do not have adjacent footpaths.

Heritage Issues

It was accepted that there are no indigenous or post European settlement cultural heritage issues in the vicinity of Turtons Track.

3.2 The Turtons Track Options

3.2.1 Status Quo

This option received a very low level of support. The following table includes the summary information relating to the option of maintaining Turtons Track in its current unsealed form, with the option of some drainage works that may reduce the incidence of landslips and road closures.

Option	Cost	Capacity	Safety	Environment Impacts	Economic Impacts	Other Local Impacts
1. Status Quo (No Change)	\$645k annual maintenance cost (Possibly reduced if drainage improvement works undertaken)	Low speed 2 way	Continuing safety issues including higher collision risk	No widening and therefore no vegetation loss Continuing vegetation loss and land and water disturbance from land slips (subject to impact of any drainage upgrade)	No major improvement in tourist use or opportunities. Rental cars restrictions continue Lack of certainty of access due to possible road closures	Existing local travel options continue Possible continuing inconvenience of track closures No increase in traffic

Discussion

Safety

Concerns were raised regarding driving safety, particularly for people not familiar with the track. Many local people felt because of their knowledge of the track and the track conditions, that they could negotiate Turtons Track safely. However concerns were raised regarding the capacity of visitors to safely negotiate the track. Safety issues arise in wet and dry times, with dust from the road during dry periods causing visibility problems. With the increase in traffic on Turtons Track following the opening of the Otway Fly, a common view was that Turtons Track was becoming less safe to travel and this would be further exacerbated with more traffic on the unsealed track.

Environmental impacts

There was general agreement that landslips along the track caused vegetation loss and that action needs to be taken to prevent the landslips. The other factor of landslips is the inconvenience caused because of the track closure. Leaving the track in its current form overcomes the issue of vegetation loss that may result from track widening; however there was a general view that safety improvements and continuity of access were paramount. It was also felt that some vegetation loss would be an acceptable trade off for increased safety and accessibility, and there are environmental benefits through preventing vegetation loss from landslips.

Economic impacts

There was a broad view that retaining the unsealed Track does nothing to improve economic outcomes because:

- The restrictions on hire car use remain.
- Lack of certainty of use continues.
- There is no capacity to market the touring route, incorporating Turtons Track, because of safety issues, restricted access to hire cars and the likelihood that the track may be closed during periods of the year.
- Safety issues continue with people often deterred from, and encouraged not to use Turtons Track.
- Optimum traffic numbers won't be achieved and any increase in traffic will exacerbate traffic safety problems.
- The likelihood of increased patronage at towns on or close to the tourism drive will be lost, or diminished.

Other local impacts

Concerns were expressed regarding the inconvenience, time and cost of travel when Turtons Track is closed, with the travel distance between the eastern and western ends of Turtons Track increased by approximately 70 kilometres. Inconvenience and safety issues were voiced as major local issues associated with not undertaking upgrade works.

Overall Assessment of Turtons Track Status Quo Option

Subject to a very small number of dissenting views, the status quo option received little support.

3.2.2 One Way Sealed Road (East – West)

This option was not supported. Limited discussion took place regarding whether the one-way traffic movement might be from east to west or west to east. There were some differing views on what directions might be most appropriate. However the issue of direction was considered a point of interest only, because irrespective of the direction of traffic movement the one-way option received no support.

The following table includes the summary information relating to the option of making Turtons Track a one-way sealed track.

Option	Cost	Capacity	Safety	Environment Impacts	Economic Impacts	Other Local Impacts
2. Sealed one-way road - (east to west)	\$3m-\$4.8m <i>Improved drainage reducing slips and annual repair costs.</i>	<i>(Light vehicles) Low speed travel One-way movement (east to west) reduces travel flexibility</i>	<i>Improved safety compared with status quo Emergency access issues</i>	<i>Little or no road widening required and therefore minimal vegetation loss Reduced land slips minimize ongoing environmental damage</i>	<i>Iconic touring route (loop) established Sealing of road improves touring options and tourism outcomes One way limits travel and tourism options and local traffic use</i>	<i>One way only will be inconvenient to local people, and possibly increase travel costs Improved certainty of access to track Possible increase in traffic</i>

Discussion

Safety

People acknowledged that a one-way track would improve safety, except in the circumstance that people might elect to ignore the one-way status of the track and travel in the wrong direction. People also generally believed that sealing the track would improve road safety.

Environmental impacts

There was general agreement that improving drainage and overcoming landslips would be highly desirable in reducing vegetation loss where the landslips occur. People also acknowledged that the one-way width of 4-metres avoids vegetation loss that may result from track widening associated with the two-way options. However these issues were not paramount in the discussions.

Economic impacts

There was a general view that sealing Turtons Track would:

- Overcome the restrictions on hire car use and promote greater tourism use; and
- Improve safety, which would encourage greater use.

There was a general view that dealing with drainage issues would provide greater certainty of access and therefore greater capacity to market the tourism drive.

However the overriding concerns related to the restriction on two-way travel and the resulting impact on use of the track because of lack of travel flexibility and the loss of tourism opportunities, which would benefit from being able to undertake the tourism drive from any direction.

Other local impacts

The dominant issue with the one-way option was the level of local travel inconvenience and additional travel cost and time (irrespective of whether the road travel direction is east-west or west-east).

Overall Assessment of Turtons Track One-Way Sealed Option

There was not supported.

3.2.3 Two Way Sealed Road (5 metres wide)

This option was strongly supported. The following table includes the summary information relating to the option of upgrading Turtons Track to a 5-metre two-way sealed track.

<i>Option</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Capacity</i>	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Environment Impacts</i>	<i>Economic Impacts</i>	<i>Other Local Impacts</i>
<i>3. Sealed two-way 5m wide (with some passing areas)</i>	<i>\$4.2m – \$4.9m Improved drainage reducing slips and annual repair costs.</i>	<i>(Light vehicles) Low speed travel Restricted passing width may cause some bottlenecks</i>	<i>Improved safety compared with unsealed No emergency access issues</i>	<i>Limited road widening needed beyond table drain, and therefore minimal vegetation loss Reduced land slips minimize ongoing environmental damage</i>	<i>Iconic touring route (loop) established Better tourism outcomes as it creates a two-way touring route (increased length of stay and yield) Maintains relative integrity of the track and surrounds</i>	<i>More convenient for local traffic and reduced travel costs Improved safety is positive Increase in touring traffic Improved certainty of access to track</i>

Discussion

Safety

There was a general view that:

- Sealing Turtons Track would improve safety, when compared with the current unsealed condition.
- That having a 5-metre pavement would improve passing safety, with less likelihood of collisions or cars being forced off the track.

Some people believed that having a minimum two-way width of 5 metres would provide greater safety and reinforce the low speed environment, whereas a greater pavement width (6-metres) would encourage people to travel faster.

Environmental impacts

There was a general view that while it is desirable to have a two way sealed road, that in so far as it is possible, vegetation disturbance and loss should be kept to a minimum. Those of this mind favoured the 5-metre two-way sealed option, because it requires less road widening than the 6-metre option. There were differing views on how to revegetate areas affected by vegetation loss and soil disturbance. The knowledge/perceptions of vegetation remediation influenced peoples' views on the 5-metre and 6-metre options. However most people felt that providing a two way sealed option, while minimizing vegetation loss as far as possible, and maintaining the integrity of the environment and the intimacy of Turtons Track was the preferred position. Reducing vegetation loss from landslips was viewed favourably.

Economic impacts

Consistent with comments on economic impacts of the one way sealed option, there was a general view that the sealing of Turtons Track would:

- Overcome the restrictions on hire car use and promote greater tourism use; and
- Increase safety, which would encourage greater use.

In addition there was a general view that dealing with drainage issues and overcoming landslips would provide greater certainty of access to Turtons Track and enable active marketing and promotion of the tourism drive.

The capacity to travel either way was seen as important to provide touring flexibility and link the touring experience with other tourism product including eating and accommodation. The two-way option was generally viewed as paramount for maximizing tourism opportunities.

Other local impacts

The sealed two-way 5-metre option was strongly supported as it provided for better local use of Turtons Track, less cost of other travel options and greater convenience.

Overall Assessment of Turtons Track Two-Way 5-Metre Sealed Option

There was a high level of support for this option. Support was based on providing greater local convenience and certainty of use of the road, improved road safety, better and more convenient touring options, a highly marketable iconic tourist drive which would result in economic benefits, while at the same time minimizing vegetation loss associated with road widening and retaining the intimacy of the travel experience.

3.2.4 Two Way Sealed Road (6 metres wide)

This option received some support as the preferred option and some support as a partial/hybrid option, linked with the 5 metre two-way sealed option (with a 6-metre pavement where it can be achieved without additional vegetation loss, and otherwise a 5-metre pavement). The following table includes the summary information relating to the option of upgrading Turtons Track to a 6-metre two-way sealed track.

Option	Cost	Capacity	Safety	Environment Impacts	Economic Impacts	Other Local Impacts
4. Sealed two-way 6m wide (with some passing areas)	\$4.2m- \$7.7m Improved drainage reducing slips and annual repair costs.	(Light vehicles) Low speed travel Less traffic bottlenecks	Improved safety compared with other options due to increased road width No emergency access issues	Some road widening required beyond the table drain (particularly Coutts Road to Forrest-Apollo Bay Road – 8.4 kms of road at 1-1.5 metres uphill) which will cause vegetation loss and soil exposure Reduced land slips minimize ongoing environmental damage	Iconic touring route (loop) established Better tourism outcomes as it creates a two-way touring route (increased length of stay and yield) More vegetation loss may be detriment to tourism experience	More convenient for local traffic and reduced travel costs Improved safety is positive Increase in touring traffic Improved certainty of access to track

Discussion

Safety

The views on safety were similar to the five metre two-way option with the exception that:

- Some people thought the 6-metre option would increase passing width and therefore increase safety
- Some people thought that with increasing traffic the 6-metre option would provide a more robust longer term option
- Some people thought the increase in width would encourage people to travel faster, therefore reducing safety

There were mixed views whether this option would enhance safety when compared with the 5-metre two way sealed option.

Environmental impacts

Those who supported this option considered the loss of vegetation resulting from road widening to be acceptable on the basis of increased safety and better longer term planning. There was also a view among those people that with appropriate remediation work revegetation would successfully occur over 1-2 years (although the specific type of vegetation may be different to that which is removed). As with the 5-metre option there were differing views regarding revegetation. The knowledge/perceptions of vegetation remediation influenced peoples' views regarding the 6-metre option and the 5-metre option.

Many people were concerned that the 6-metre option would result in vegetation loss, particularly between Coutts Road and Forrest-Apollo Bay Road, where Turtons Track is most narrow, and where widening would require more space than is provided by extending the road pavement into the area of the existing table drain.

There was a further view that the 6-metre option could be adopted where it does not result in greater vegetation loss than the 5-metre option, with the track in other parts to be 5-metres wide.

As with the other options, the reduction in vegetation loss from landslips was viewed favourably.

Economic impacts

The views on economic impacts were similar to the 5-metre option with the following variations:

- The greater vegetation loss resulting from the increased widening for the 6-metre option may negatively impact the ambience of the track (until revegetation occurs), which may impact upon peoples' impression of the experience.
- The increased road width may negatively affect the intimacy of the touring experience.
- The increased road width will cater better for increased traffic load, which will improve driving safety and cater for more traffic, which will have spin off benefits for the businesses and communities in the Otways.

Other local impacts

There were no identified local travel benefits arising from the 6-metre option compared with the 5-metre option, other than the view of some people that the 6-metre option would improve overall travel safety.

Overall Assessment of Turtons Track Two-Way 6-Metre Sealed Option

There was some support for the 6-metre option over the 5-metre option. The support was based on better safety, better long term planning and greater capacity than the 5-metre option. This was reinforced by a view that vegetation loss was a fair trade off for these benefits and that subject to appropriate remediation the affected areas would revegetate over a relatively short period (1-2 years). Those who didn't support this option were concerned regarding the greater vegetation loss and possible loss of intimacy of the touring experience. There were others who supported the "hybrid" option incorporating elements of the 5-metre and 6-metre options.

3.3 *Other Issues and Comments*

Other matters of a more overarching manner were raised. Following is a summary of the other comments.

Broadly supported additional comments

- That a process be established to enable effective communication and ongoing engagement with organisations and people during any upgrade works.
- Turtons Track be maintained and promoted as a low speed touring environment.
- That there be appropriate entrance signage to Turtons Track (both ends) which confirm the special aesthetic of the Turtons Track touring experience, and which indicates travel times and confirm the traveling environment and the natural environment that people are entering.
- That signage is kept to a minimum along the track.
- That consideration needs to be given to improving other roads in the region that will be impacted by increased traffic, particularly the Forrest/Apollo Bay Road, roads in and around Beech Forest etc.
- That stopping/viewing areas be provided to enable people to safely stop and take in the beauty of the environment.
- That consideration be given to the pavement colour to ensure a colour is used that best fits the environmental aesthetic.
- The vegetation canopy is very important to the intimacy of the driving experience and every effort must be taken to retain the vegetation canopy

Other comments of a technical nature

- That any widening could more effectively take place on the downhill side of the road (filling outwards rather than cutting into the uphill bank).
- That subject to appropriate treatment, where vegetation is disturbed, it would replenish within a relatively short period of time.
- Care needs to be taken to ensure that the vehicle designation (light vehicle) does not prevent other legitimate access (such as logging trucks transporting softwood from the Beech Forest area).
- A six-metre road would provide a better long-term option and improve road safety, quality and durability.
- Signage issues (continuity, consistency, readability etc) must be attended more broadly within the Otways and particularly in areas proximate to Turtons Track.

- That it may be possible to have small sections of road less than 5 metres wide where that overcomes vegetation loss, while still retaining Turtons Track as a safe two-way sealed iconic touring route.

Other comments

There have been other contributions that should be noted, although they are outside the scope of responses that relate to the subject matter of the consultancy, namely the identification of the preferred upgrade option for Turtons Track. These matters/responses include:

- Money should be spent on other roads and infrastructure, and not on Turtons Track

4. Conclusion

From the consultation process it is very clear that the vast majority of people who have participated in the consultation process favour Turtons Track being upgraded to a two-way sealed track. The 5-metre two-way sealed option is the most favoured. While this conclusion can be reached from the responses provided, no doubt other views will surface. Every reasonable effort has been made to provide the opportunity for people and organisations to have input into the future treatment of Turtons track. This Report reflects views and perspectives contributed directly by people (in their own capacity or as representatives of organisation). Other views and perspectives based on hearsay and third party interpretations have been considered but not afforded the same weight.

*Attachment One -Turtons Track
Discussion Paper*

1. Introduction

This document collates the available information on Turtions Track upgrade options to assist people to understand the range of issues and to facilitate informed discussions on the preferred option to best achieve desired environmental, social and economic outcomes. Summaries of the following Reports have been included:

- ⇒ *VicRoads Turtions Track Upgrade Investigation 2005*
- ⇒ *DSE Tourism Plan for Public Land in the Otway Hinterland January 2005*
- ⇒ *Great Ocean Road Region Land Use and Transport Strategy 2004*
- ⇒ *Tourism Victoria Great Ocean Road Tourism Development Plan 2004 – 2007*
- ⇒ *Geelong Otway Tourism Strategic Business Plan 2003 – 2007*
- ⇒ *VicRoads Turtions Track Tourism Strategy Issues Paper 2005*
- ⇒ *Environmental Assessment of Potential Road Upgrade to Turtions Track 2005*
- ⇒ *Turtions Track Cultural Heritage Assessment 2005*
- ⇒ *Economic Evaluation of Turtions Track Upgrade Options (Current) (Preliminary findings)*

2. Report Summaries

2.1 VicRoads Turtions Track Upgrade Investigation 2005

This Report explores potential upgrade options, the scope of required works and cost estimates of the options. The Report provides the following general physical description of Turtions Track:

Approximately 3.5 kms of the western end of Turtions Track is relatively wide (approximately 6 metres) with reasonable sight distances however the central and eastern ends have carriageway widths varying from 4-6 metres and sight distances that restrict the maximum safe vehicle speed to less than 40kms per hour.

In 2005 there have been over 30 landslips along Turtions Track, costing approximately \$1.4m to repair. The ongoing annual repair and maintenance cost has been estimated at \$650,000.

The Report explores five options:

1. No change to the Turtions Track (Status Quo)
2. 4.5 metre one-way sealed (#Only light vehicles)
3. 5 metre two-way sealed (#Only light vehicles)
4. 6 metre two-way sealed (#Only light vehicles)
5. 8.8 metres two-way sealed (included for illustrative purposes only – this option will not be adopted)

#(Light vehicles include car, campervans and motorbikes but excludes trucks, caravans or commercial vehicles)

Summary of Findings from the VicRoads Turtons Track Upgrade Investigation 2005

Option	Cost	Environment Impact	Safety	Capacity
1. Status Quo (unsealed two-way)	\$645k annual maintenance cost	No widening and therefore no vegetation loss However continuing vegetation loss and land and water disturbance from land slips	Relatively higher risk of accidents including collisions	Low speed 2 way traffic Not well suited to current or increased tourist use. Many rental cars cannot use Turtons Track
2. Sealed one-way road (east to west)	\$3m-\$4.8m subject to pavement depth (includes pavement construction and improved drainage). Reduces annual maintenance costs.	Little or no road widening required and therefore minimal impact on flora and fauna Reduced land slips resulting in less vegetation loss and land and water disturbance	Improved safety resulting from road sealing (better traction and reduced stopping distances), and traffic moving in one direction May encourage speeding because of one-way traffic Problem of emergency access	(Light vehicles) Low speed travel Traffic flow and volume limited by one-way movement (east to west) which does not maximize touring options and limits local traffic use
3. Sealed two-way 5m wide (where it can be achieved – otherwise passing areas provided)	Approximately \$4.2m	Limited road widening needed beyond table drain, and therefore minimal soil disturbance and vegetation loss Reduced land slips resulting in less vegetation loss and land and water disturbance	Improved safety resulted from improved surface, better visibility and retaining low speed environment. Where widening cannot be achieved the proposal incorporates passing bays	(Light vehicles) Low speed travel Better tourism outcomes as it creates a two-way touring route More convenient for local traffic
4. Sealed two-way 6m wide (where it can be achieved – otherwise passing areas provided)	\$4.2m - \$7.7m subject to pavement depth (includes pavement construction and improved drainage). Reduces annual maintenance costs	Some road widening required beyond the table drain (particularly between Coutts Road and Forrest-Apollo Bay Road – 8.4 kms of road at 1-1.5 metres uphill) which will cause soil disturbance and vegetation loss in that area Less land slips resulting in less vegetation loss and land and water disturbance	Improved safety resulted from improved surface, better visibility and retaining low speed environment. Where widening cannot be achieved the proposal incorporates passing bays	(Light vehicles) Low speed travel Better tourism outcomes as it creates a two-way touring route but restricted passing width may limit capacity and cause bottlenecks More convenient for local traffic
5. Sealed two-way 8.8m wide (illustrative option only- this option will not be adopted)	\$16.5m - \$23m depending on numbers of bridges	Major realignment and substantial impact on flora and fauna Major visual obtrusion and loss of appeal of a low speed scenic drive Less land slips resulting in less vegetation loss and land and water disturbance	Much better visibility and improved safety	(All traffic-capable of taking heavy vehicles) Can accommodate buses and trucks which other options cannot Loss of “experience”

2.2 Tourism Plan for Public Land in the Otway Hinterland January 2005

This Tourism Plan was prepared for DSE to guide the allocation of tourism funding under the New Future for the Otways Tourism Initiative. Turtons Track was identified as part of an Otways “Independent Zone” providing experiences for independent visitors, which requires access to sealed driving tracks.

The following dominant issues were identified in the Tourism Plan:

- ⇒ The core tourism experience on public land is dependent on roads and tracks provided and maintained by the public sector. The Otways lack a suitable “flagship” tourism drive and there is a need for consolidation of the drive tour experience and the supporting road network
- ⇒ Driving and touring are core experiences in the Otways, it is a natural extension to the Great Ocean Road (GOR) experience, it is easy to market and it is the most accessible way to experience the tourism offerings of the Otways in a time and cost effective manner
- ⇒ Drives work best as loops which link nature based experiences, food and beverage stops and accommodation.
- ⇒ A priority strategy is to develop one main touring route (that includes Turtons Track). The objective is to condense the visitor experience into areas of highest appeal, consolidate the number of tracks and roads in use, and incorporate “spending points”.

The Tourism Plan recommends:

- ⇒ The development of an iconic touring route incorporating Turtons Track.
- ⇒ That Turtons Track provide for slow driving on a sealed surface for light vehicles, some pull over parking for 5 minute viewing, minimal track straightening and a design to minimize cut, fill and vegetation loss.

2.3 Great Ocean Road Region Land Use and Transport Strategy 2004

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) Land Use and Transport Strategy aims to guide sustainable development of the region through balanced and managed growth of selected towns along the coast and inland. It recommends the development and promotion of inland routes with DSE to identify north-south and east-west touring routes through public land in the Otways with the objective to spread traffic load and introduce visitors to a variety of hinterland experiences.

The Strategy proposes the Otways region “be promoted as Australia’s premier touring destination” with the touring experience to be developed and promoted in the Otways hinterland, to link the region’s natural attractions, heritage and produce through establishment of a main touring route through the Otway Ranges, including the Turtons Track section.

2.4 Tourism Victoria’s Great Ocean Road Tourism Development Plan 2004 – 2007

The GOR Tourism Development Plan notes “ Victoria has the strongest reputation as a touring state in Australia”. As part of tourism product development the plan proposes the development of hinterland touring routes. Specifically the Plan highlights the need to develop hinterland touring routes and visitor experiences, and continuation of nature and

touring as a point of difference for the GOR (and hinterland) region. The overall Strategy objective is to increase visitor length of stay and yield.

2.5 Geelong Otway Tourism Strategic Business Plan 2003 – 2007

The GOT Strategic Business Plan provides: - (*Product Development*) - Encourage the development of tourism product and experiences that enhances the region's competitive strengths; (*Marketing*) - Undertake intrastate and interstate marketing of the region focusing on competitive advantages and addressing challenges of seasonality, length of stay and yield.

2.6 VicRoads Turtons Track Tourist Strategy - Issues Paper

The Turtons Track Tourism Strategy Issues Paper aimed to identify and evaluate options for future management/development of Turtons Track. The dominant identified issues include:

- ⇒ Turtons Track traverses forest that includes some rare flora and fauna species.
- ⇒ The cool temperate rainforest and wet forest ecosystems are a key attraction.
- ⇒ Although Turtons Track is primarily a tourist road it also provides local access to towns and attractions.
- ⇒ Due to the mountainous terrain and high rainfall, the area is subject to landslips, which can close the track for long periods.
- ⇒ Turtons Track's takes approximately 25 minutes to drive in favourable weather due to the curving alignment and narrow pavement width, with sight distances often limited to around 25 metres.
- ⇒ Prior to the opening of the Otway Fly in August 2003, Turtons Track carried an average of 30 vehicles per day.
- ⇒ Since the opening of the Otway Fly, traffic volumes have risen to approximately 70 vehicles per day in off peak periods and 220 vehicles per day in peak periods (2003-04 post Christmas holiday period).
- ⇒ Drainage is an ongoing issue along the entire length of Turtons Track.
- ⇒ Development of the road without a drainage upgrade is likely to increase the frequency of landslips.
- ⇒ Because of the unsealed nature of Turtons Track some visitors to the Otways avoid Turtons Track.

2.7 Environmental Assessment of a potential road upgrade of Turtons Track – Report for DSE

This preliminary assessment work aimed to identify flora and fauna values of the study area (refer below), provide advice on regeneration of vegetation on roadside batters and make recommendations to avoid or mitigate potential impacts on environmentally significant sites. This does *not* replace a comprehensive environmental assessment once/if an upgrade option is selected.

The study area was a corridor being 20 metres uphill from the road, 10 metres downhill from the road and 15 metres either side of the road where the surrounding land is flat. The Environmental Assessment Report identified significant biodiversity values along Turtons Track and recommended that potential impacts should be considered when determining the alignment and extent of works for any potential upgrade of Turtons

Track. It recommended a number of mitigation measures that would limit these impacts (which can be found in the full Report). Following is a summary of the Report findings:

Flora

- ⇒ Two Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC's) were identified along Turtons Track (1) Wet Forest (2) Cool Temperate Rainforest.
- ⇒ The majority of Turtons Track adjoins the Wet Forest EVC, which is identified as being an EVC of least concern in the Otway Ranges bioregion.
- ⇒ The quality of Wet Forest was assessed as very high along approximately 6.5km of the eastern section of Turtons Track, supporting a number of rare and threatened plant species.
- ⇒ Along the western end of Turtons Track the vegetation is regenerating on previously cleared farmland, and is of lower quality.
- ⇒ The Cool Temperate Rainforest community is listed as threatened in Victoria and is also identified as being vulnerable within the Otway Ranges Bioregion.
- ⇒ Two sections of Cool Temperate Rainforest near the eastern end of Turtons Track are of very high quality, showing little or no disturbance.
- ⇒ A rainforest site of significance was identified at Olangolah Creek, in the vicinity of Turtons Track. This site was identified as one of only two rainforest sites in Victoria of National significance.
- ⇒ A total of 47 flora species were identified in the study area (41 native species, 6 exotic species), with the Slender Tree-fern (identified in 4 locations) listed as threatened under the FFG Act.
- ⇒ All indigenous species occurring within Cool Temperate Rainforest have some conservation significance.
- ⇒ Large numbers of Satinwood occur close to Turtons Track. This is listed as rare in Victoria. In the order of 100 individuals were located within 5-10m uphill from Turtons Track in high quality Wet Forest and Cool Temperate Rainforest.
- ⇒ Many large trees were identified in the study area, which provide potential habitat and roosting sites for fauna.
- ⇒ The study area contains some of the oldest stands of mature Wet Forest in the Otway Ranges, which have not been subjected to logging

Fauna

- ⇒ The high quality sections of Wet Forest and Cool Temperate Rainforest along Turtons Track provide high value habitat.
- ⇒ Nine rare or threatened animal species are recorded within 5km of the study area.

Threats to biodiversity

- ⇒ Soil disturbance resulting from landslips and subsequent roadworks has led to some minor weed establishment along high quality sections of Turtons Track.
- ⇒ Continuing landslips and subsequent road works to stabilise Turtons Track represent a significant and continuing threat to the vegetation of the study area.
- ⇒ Landslips and erosion at gullies crossed by Turtons Track have the potential to mobilise sediments, which could enter downstream water catchment areas.
- ⇒ The steep nature of the area uphill of Turtons Track is likely to limit the amount of regeneration that can occur in many areas.

2.8 Turtons Track Cultural Heritage Assessment 2005 – Report for DSE

The objective of this Study was to identify and record Aboriginal and historical cultural heritage sites specifically at risk from any potential upgrade of Turtons Track. It found:

- ⇒ No Aboriginal sites were identified during the field survey and the study area was identified as having a low archaeological potential.
- ⇒ Information on Aboriginal site distribution suggests only limited potential for very diffuse stone artifact scatters and isolated artifacts within the study area.
- ⇒ This rating of low potential is given despite knowledge of historical logging activities within the immediate vicinity of the study area and the fact that the known routes of some historical tramways overlap or at least are located alongside the present route of Turtons Track.

2.9 Economic Evaluation of Turtons Track Upgrade Options

The objective of this Study is to assess of the costs and benefits to the wider community of the various options (Status Quo and the upgrade options) and to identify the best option in terms of maximising the net benefits to the wider community. The Study has not been completed. Further details will be provided at the Community Workshops. Following is a summary of the preliminary findings of the Study. For environmental impacts refer to *VicRoads Turtons Track Upgrade Investigation 2005* (page 2 this Discussion Paper)

Option	Economic Impacts	Social Impacts
1. Status Quo (unsealed two-way)	<i>No major capital expenditure needed Cost of ongoing maintenance No improvement in tourism outcomes</i>	<i>Inconvenience and costs associated with road closure</i>
2. Sealed one-way road (east to west)	<i>Capital costs of \$3m-\$4.8m. Reduced annual maintenance costs Better accessibility for touring (although limited because of one-way nature of the track), providing better tourism experience; benefits to the local and State economy from additional tourist spending and opportunities for establishment of new businesses in the region. Savings in vehicle travel times and operating costs (for local residents) Reduced business costs through overcoming track closure</i>	<i>Greater convenience for travel and less disruption resulting from track closure Improved road safety Inconvenience of one-way traffic movement only Possible negative impacts of increased traffic</i>
3. Sealed two-way 5m wide (where it can be achieved – otherwise passing areas provided)	<i>Approximately \$4.2m (with some variation depending on pavement depth) Reduced annual maintenance costs Greater accessibility for touring (two-way which can be traveled east-west and west-east) providing better and more accessible tourism experience; benefits to the local and State economy from additional tourist spending and opportunities for establishment of new businesses in the region. Savings in vehicle travel times and operating costs (for local residents), with greater benefits from two-way access Reduced business costs through overcoming track closure</i>	<i>Greater convenience for travel and less disruption resulting from track closure Improved road safety Improved convenience of two-way traffic movement Retain low speed environment Possible negative impacts of increased traffic</i>
4. Sealed two-way 6m wide (where it can be achieved – otherwise passing areas provided)	<i>\$4.2m- \$7.7m subject to pavement depth Otherwise the same economic outcomes as option 3 above</i>	<i>The same impacts apply as in Option 3 above, with possible greater safety due to wider two-way option</i>
5. Sealed two-way 8.8m wide (illustrative option only- this option will not be adopted)	<i>\$16.5m - \$23m depending on numbers of bridges Costs and benefits similar to Options 2, 3 and 4 above with some change in magnitude Reduced touring amenity and tourism appeal</i>	<i>Much better visibility and improved safety Loss of amenity</i>

Attachment Two-Turtons Track Options Table

*As presented to the Community Meetings as part of the
community consultation process*

Summary of Turtons Track Upgrade Issues and Impacts

Option	Cost	Capacity	Safety	Environment Impacts	Economic Impacts	Other Local Impacts
1. Status Quo (No Change)	\$645k annual maintenance cost (Possibly reduced if drainage improvement works undertaken)	Low speed 2 way	Continuing safety issues including higher collision risk	No widening and therefore no vegetation loss Continuing vegetation loss and land and water disturbance from land slips (subject to impact of any drainage upgrade)	No major improvement in tourist use or opportunities. Rental cars restrictions continue Lack of certainty of access due to possible road closures	Existing local travel options continue Possible continuing inconvenience of track closures No increase in traffic
2. Sealed one-way road - (east to west)	\$3m-\$4.8m Improved drainage reducing slips and annual repair costs.	(Light vehicles) Low speed travel One-way movement (east to west) reduces travel flexibility	Improved safety compared with status quo Emergency access issues	Little or no road widening required and therefore minimal vegetation loss Reduced land slips minimize ongoing environmental damage	Iconic touring route (loop) established Sealing of road improves touring options and tourism outcomes One way limits travel and tourism options and local traffic use	One way only will be inconvenient to local people, and possibly increase travel costs Improved certainty of access to track Possible increase in traffic
3. Sealed two-way 5m wide (with some passing areas)	\$4.2m – \$4.9m Improved drainage reducing slips and annual repair costs.	(Light vehicles) Low speed travel Restricted passing width may cause some bottlenecks	Improved safety compared with unsealed No emergency access issues	Limited road widening needed beyond table drain, and therefore minimal vegetation loss Reduced land slips minimize ongoing environmental damage	Iconic touring route (loop) established Better tourism outcomes as it creates a two-way touring route (increased length of stay and yield) Maintains relative integrity of the track and surrounds	More convenient for local traffic and reduced travel costs Improved safety is positive Increase in touring traffic Improved certainty of access to track
4. Sealed two-way 6m wide (with some passing areas)	\$4.2m- \$7.7m Improved drainage reducing slips and annual repair costs.	(Light vehicles) Low speed travel Less traffic bottlenecks	Improved safety compared with other options due to increased road width No emergency access issues	Some road widening required beyond the table drain (particularly Coutts Road to Forrest-Apollo Bay Road – 8.4 kms of road at 1-1.5 metres uphill) which will cause vegetation loss and soil exposure Reduced land slips minimize ongoing environmental damage	Iconic touring route (loop) established Better tourism outcomes as it creates a two-way touring route (increased length of stay and yield) More vegetation loss may be detrimental to tourism experience	More convenient for local traffic and reduced travel costs Improved safety is positive Increase in touring traffic Improved certainty of access to track

Overarching Issues Summary.

Environmental – Turtons Track traverses high quality Wet Forest and Cool Temperate Rainforest Environments; Cool Temperate Rainforest is listed as threatened in Victoria and vulnerable in the Otways; There are a number of rare vegetation species; The vegetation provides high quality habitat; Continuing landslips create a threat to vegetation and water quality

Tourism (Economic) – *Touring is a core experience in the Otways; The development of an iconic touring loop incorporating Turtons Track is a consistently recognized tourism priority; The Wet Forrest and Cool Temperate Rainforest Environments are major tourism assets.*

Cultural Heritage – There are no issues