

APPENDIX 1: Literature Review

Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Expansion Project

MASTERPLAN

This literature review summarises the key findings and design implications from the associated reference documentation and explains how each document informs the Masterplan decisions.



World Trail Smithfield MTB Expansion Concept Report – World Trail (2022)

The 2022 concept establishes the strategic intent to treat the SMBP Extension as a significant enhancement to an existing ecotourism product – one that remains a tourism drawcard and is designed / managed sustainably to protect and showcase the environment. The Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Trail Expansion Project – Detailed Site Analysis (2025) by RPS and the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Trail Expansion – Operational Analysis (2025) by BDO were based on this design.

Masterplan Implications

- Concept is necessary but not sufficient: the procurement brief is explicit that the concept must be revised into a trail Masterplan suitable for approvals pathways and detailed field validation.
- The concept needs to be reconciled with tenure and boundary conditions (noting stakeholder / regulator concerns raised later in the operational analysis regarding trails extending beyond Conservation Park boundaries).
- Sustainability claim must be operationalised through location-specific standards (grades, drainage, soil response, wet season resilience), not only “good intent”.

Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Trail Expansion Project – Detailed Site Analysis - RPS (2025)

The Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Trail Expansion Project – Detailed Site Analysis prepared by RPS (February 2025) provides a comprehensive assessment of the planning, environmental, tenure, and statutory approval context for the proposed expansion of the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park. The study was commissioned by CRC to inform project viability, approvals pathways, and future investment decisions.

Purpose and scope

The RPS study undertook a high-level planning and environmental assessment of a proposed expansion that would increase the trail network to approximately 82 kilometres, incorporating new trails, internal access roads, and supporting infrastructure. The assessment examined land tenure and ownership, applicable legislative frameworks, environmental constraints, planning approval pathways, staging considerations, and operational implications, including trailhead requirements. Collectively, the study establishes the regulatory and environmental “envelope” within which the Masterplan must operate.

Land tenure and approvals context

RPS identified that the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park spans approximately 25 separately titled land parcels, predominantly within Smithfield Conservation Park, with additional parcels under the control of JCU and CRC. The study confirms that different tenure types trigger different approval pathways, with certain development types requiring owner’s consent under the Planning Act 2016. Approvals on state land, including Conservation Park, are subject to additional scrutiny and consent processes.

This complexity has direct implications for feasibility, timing, and risk, particularly where trail development relies on land outside the Conservation Park or where approvals are uncertain.

Legislative and statutory framework

The study maps the key legislative framework applicable to the project, including the Nature Conservation Act 1992, Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993, Vegetation Management Act 1999, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003, Native Title Act 1993, and CairnsPlan 2016. RPS highlights that compliance will require careful coordination across multiple regulatory regimes, particularly in areas of high environmental or cultural sensitivity.

The study confirms that the Masterplan must be understood as a strategic framework only, with final trail alignments and infrastructure subject to detailed design, environmental assessment, and cultural heritage approvals.

Environmental constraints

RPS identified significant environmental constraints across the study area, including regulated vegetation, essential habitat, high ecological value waters, wildlife habitat for endangered or vulnerable species, and areas subject to Wet Tropics World Heritage zoning.

The study notes that opportunities for new trail development within Wet Tropics World Heritage land are extremely limited. While maintenance of trails existing prior to 2020 may be permitted, new trail construction is unlikely and ongoing maintenance would require additional permits, imposing administrative and financial burdens. On this basis, RPS recommends excluding the existing trail connection to the Kuranda Range from the expansion project due to the complexity and risk associated with Wet Tropics approvals.

Cultural heritage and native title

The study identifies recorded cultural heritage sites within the study area and notes that the land is subject to a native title claim by the Djabugay Nation (QC2016/008). Works in areas of cultural heritage significance may require agreements with Traditional Owners and potentially a Cultural Heritage Management Plan or Indigenous Land Use Agreement.

RPS emphasises that meaningful and demonstrable engagement with Traditional Owners must be underway before the State will consider issuing owner's consent for approvals on state land.

Staging and delivery considerations

RPS proposes a staged delivery approach, including early works focused on maintenance and improving all-weather access to shuttle routes, followed by construction of new trails and staged delivery of trailhead infrastructure, potentially commencing with interim solutions. The study highlights the importance of flexibility in staging to respond to wet season constraints, latent site conditions, cultural heritage discoveries, and evolving design requirements.

Operational model and trailhead considerations

The study identifies long-term operational sustainability as critical to project success. RPS notes that core maintenance and operations will require ongoing funding, that multiple revenue streams may be necessary to offset operational costs, and that trailhead infrastructure should be designed to support both operational needs and potential commercial activities such as shuttles, hire, and visitor services, subject to approvals. A concept trailhead with frontage to Captain Cook Highway was developed to test spatial and operational requirements.

Masterplan Implications

The RPS Detailed Site Analysis provides the foundational statutory, environmental, and tenure context for the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Extension Masterplan. Collectively, the study confirms that the Masterplan must:

- prioritise land tenure certainty and minimise reliance on parcels with complex or high-risk approval pathways;
- clearly distinguish between areas suitable for expansion and areas where new trail development is not viable due to environmental or statutory constraints;
- embed early and ongoing cultural heritage engagement and retain flexibility to adapt alignments and staging in response to findings;
- adopt a staged and adaptive delivery model that responds to approvals timing, wet season constraints, and funding availability; and
- integrate operational and financial sustainability as fundamental design drivers, particularly in relation to trailhead location, access arrangements, and maintenance logistics.

Smithfield Mountain Bike Park – Existing Trail Audit – Blue Sky Trails (2025)

The 2025 trail audit provides the most concrete “state of the asset” evidence for the existing network. It documents methodology (full network field inspections, evaluated against Australian MTB Guidelines / TDRS, sustainability best practice, risk exposure principles, and mapping / signage consistency).

Key issues raised that directly influence the extension Masterplan:

- Wayfinding and naming require significant improvement across the network.
- Known high-risk infrastructure and junction conflicts exist (e.g., dangerous bridge requiring replacement / realignment; high-risk junction requiring grade separation; trail crossing collision risks without warning signage).
- Rating integrity and feature escalation requires attention (e.g., a double-black feature within a black trail; exposure risks on a climb requiring formal risk assessment).

Masterplan Implications

The extension cannot be planned in isolation. Network legibility, signage systems, junction design principles and rating governance must be treated as whole-of-park upgrades, otherwise new trails will inherit and amplify existing confusion and risk.

Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Trail Expansion – Operational Analysis – BDO (2025)

The operational analysis defines the “operational test” the Masterplan must pass. It highlights:

- strategic goal to attract riders and major events and strengthen Cairns / TNQ’s destination reputation;
- expectation of broad economic and social benefits;
- the non-negotiable need for a sustainable operational structure and multiple revenue streams to cover operational costs;
- an indicative project scale (82 km network, 3 trailheads, ~3-year delivery program, ~\$14M capex);
- a governance model direction (an independent not-for-profit entity modelled off Rotorua Trails Trust);
- and explicit feedback that trail and trailhead design must optimise commercialisation opportunities (potentially including trailhead footprints that can support cafes / retail and access arrangements that support shuttles / tours), with JCU interest in continuing discussions about trailhead infrastructure within the existing JCU footprint.

Masterplan Implications

Design must be “operations-aware” from day one – especially regarding trailhead hierarchy, access, commercial interfaces, and maintenance logistics.

Tropical North Queensland Regional Mountain Bike Strategy – FNQROC (2024)

The Tropical North Queensland Regional Mountain Bike Strategy provides a coordinated, region-wide framework for the planning, development, and management of mountain bike destinations across Far North Queensland. The strategy identifies mountain biking as a key contributor to regional recreation, tourism, and economic development and seeks to position Tropical North Queensland as a nationally and internationally competitive mountain bike destination.

Purpose and scope

The strategy establishes a long-term vision for a connected network of complementary mountain bike destinations, recognising that individual parks perform different roles within a broader regional ecosystem. Rather than each site attempting to cater for all rider types, the strategy promotes destination differentiation, where each location leverages its unique landscape, climate, and character.

The strategy addresses:

- regional demand drivers and market segments;
- the role of flagship destinations and supporting sites;
- principles for sustainable trail development and management;
- governance and partnership models; and
- priorities for staged regional investment.

Role of Smithfield within the regional network

Within the regional framework, Smithfield Mountain Bike Park is identified as a flagship and anchor destination. Its proximity to Cairns, existing trail density, established reputation, and capacity to host major events position it as a primary drawcard for both local and visiting riders.

The strategy characterises Smithfield as a destination defined by:

- challenging terrain and technical riding opportunities;
- a strong association with elite competition and major events;
- high accessibility relative to other regional destinations; and
- significant potential to drive tourism growth when supported by appropriate infrastructure and management.

Smithfield is therefore intended to function as a high-profile destination that attracts riders into the region, rather than as a general-purpose trail network duplicating experiences available elsewhere.

Destination differentiation and experience diversity

A central theme of the strategy is that successful mountain bike regions provide a portfolio of experiences across multiple destinations, allowing riders to move between parks with distinct characters over multiple days. The strategy explicitly cautions against homogenisation and encourages each destination to develop a clear point of difference.

For Smithfield, this approach supports:

- retaining and celebrating the park's raw, technical, and demanding character;
- providing progression and accessibility without eroding its core identity; and
- delivering signature trails and event-ready infrastructure that cannot be readily replicated at smaller or less accessible sites.

Economic, tourism, and community outcomes

The strategy highlights mountain biking's role in delivering a wide range of benefits, including visitor dispersal, extended length of stay, direct expenditure on accommodation and services, employment in trail construction and operations, and improved health and wellbeing outcomes for local communities.

It notes that flagship destinations play a disproportionate role in attracting interstate and international visitors, particularly where they are supported by major events and high-quality trailhead infrastructure. Investment in such destinations therefore has significance beyond the local scale.

Governance, partnerships, and sustainability

The strategy places strong emphasis on the importance of clear governance arrangements, effective partnerships between land managers, local government, clubs, and tourism bodies, and the establishment of sustainable funding models to support ongoing operations and maintenance.

It recognises that trail expansion without corresponding investment in governance capacity and maintenance resourcing undermines long-term outcomes and can damage destination reputation.

Masterplan Implications

The Tropical North Queensland Regional Mountain Bike Strategy provides the broader strategic justification for investment in the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Extension and establishes Smithfield's intended role within a regional portfolio of destinations.

For the Smithfield Masterplan, the strategy confirms the need to:

- reinforce Smithfield's position as a flagship, destination-scale mountain bike park with a distinct technical and event-oriented identity;
- prioritise experience quality and differentiation rather than attempting to cater for all rider types or replicate other regional sites;
- balance progression and inclusivity with protection of Smithfield's established character;
- plan trailhead infrastructure and network capacity at a scale consistent with regional tourism and event expectations; and
- align trail network design, staging, and delivery with sustainable governance and funding models.

The strategy's findings are reflected in the Masterplan's emphasis on destination-scale planning, experience differentiation, event capability balanced with everyday use, long-term operational sustainability, and coordinated partnerships across agencies and stakeholders.

James Cook University Cairns Campus Master Plan - James Cook University (2019)

The *James Cook University Cairns Campus Master Plan* (2019) establishes the long-term spatial, functional, and infrastructure framework for development of the JCU Cairns campus. The Master Plan provides strategic guidance for land use, access, circulation, built form, landscape, and future expansion, with a focus on creating a connected, legible, and safe campus environment that supports teaching, research, and community engagement.

The Master Plan identifies the Cairns campus as a key institutional asset within the Smithfield area and outlines planned growth in academic facilities, student services, open space, and transport infrastructure over time. Strong emphasis is placed on managing vehicle movements, improving pedestrian and cyclist safety, and maintaining appropriate separation between different user groups.

Access and movement are central themes. The Master Plan establishes a hierarchy of campus roads, pedestrian routes, and cycling connections, with the intent of managing traffic volumes, reducing conflict, and ensuring service- and event-related vehicle movements are carefully controlled. It also highlights the importance of staging future development to avoid compromising campus operations and safety during construction or periods of high activity.

The Master Plan recognises the campus' interface with surrounding land uses, including Smithfield Conservation Park, and establishes expectations that external projects seeking to utilise campus land, roads, or infrastructure must align with JCU's operational requirements, risk management protocols, and approval processes.

Masterplan Implications

The JCU Cairns Campus Master Plan provides important institutional context for the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Extension Masterplan, particularly where proposed trailheads, event sites, access roads, or shuttle routes interface with JCU land or infrastructure.

For the Smithfield Masterplan, the JCU Master Plan reinforces the need to:

- recognise JCU as a key neighbouring landholder with its own long-term development trajectory and operational priorities;
- ensure any reliance on JCU land or roads for access, staging, or event operations is explicitly planned, justified, and subject to long term agreements;
- design access, traffic management, and event arrangements that minimise conflict and maintain safe separation between recreational, academic, and service activities;
- account for JCU requirements for contractor management, notification, and risk controls; and
- avoid assumptions of permanent access or infrastructure use on JCU land without formal approvals.

Accordingly, the Smithfield MTB Park Extension Masterplan should prioritise tenure certainty and operational independence wherever feasible, while clearly identifying and managing any necessary interfaces with the JCU Cairns campus in a transparent and risk-aware manner.

Operational Policy – Visitor Management - Mountain biking in QPWS managed areas (2011)

The QPWS Operational Policy *Mountain biking in QPWS managed areas* establishes Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's policy position for the planning, approval, and management of mountain biking on QPWS managed land. It provides direction on where mountain biking is permitted, how site suitability is assessed, and the approvals, agreements, and management arrangements required to support the activity within a protected area context.

The policy confirms that mountain biking is an acceptable recreational activity on QPWS managed land where it is compatible with conservation objectives and impacts can be effectively managed. Riding is permitted on authorised trails and roads, including designated single-use and multi-use trails, subject to suitability and management capacity.

In assessing suitability, QPWS considers land tenure and park values, environmental and social sustainability, user compatibility, safety and risk, landscape classification, availability of alternative MTB opportunities, and the strength of partnerships and management arrangements. While cross-country and touring styles are generally preferred in national parks, more active riding styles may be considered where local conditions support them, including in previously disturbed areas or where long-standing use and established demand exist.

QPWS adopts recognised trail classification and signage systems, noting the use of IMBA-based trail difficulty ratings unless superseded by QPWS standards. The policy supports the use of technical trail features where consistent with trail classification, rider expectations, and risk management principles, and encourages provision of alternate routes around higher-difficulty features where feasible.

The policy also outlines requirements for permits and agreements associated with organised events, commercial operations, and third-party involvement in trail construction and maintenance, and emphasises sustainable trail design, monitoring, adaptive management, and stakeholder engagement, particularly in high-rainfall and high-use environments.

Masterplan Implications

This policy provides the primary agency framework for the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Extension Masterplan and establishes the criteria against which expanded mountain biking must be assessed.

For the Smithfield Masterplan, the policy reinforces the need to:

- clearly demonstrate site suitability for expanded mountain biking within a conservation park context;
- prioritise sustainable trail siting and design appropriate to wet-tropical conditions;
- adopt a robust and defensible Trail Difficulty Rating System and signage framework;
- apply clear design rules for technical trail features, including alignment with trail classification and provision of alternate lines; and
- anticipate formal agreements, permits, and defined governance arrangements to support events, commercial activity, and long-term trail maintenance.

This policy underpins the Masterplan's approach to trail network planning, risk management, signage, governance, and operational sustainability.

Smithfield Conservation Park Management Statement – QPWS (2015; review date 2025)

The *Smithfield Conservation Park Management Statement* establishes the statutory purpose, management priorities, and operational context for Smithfield Conservation Park. The park was gazetted in June 2000 under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and was explicitly acquired to provide a suitable location for off-road mountain bike riding in the Cairns region alongside protection of natural and cultural values.

The Management Statement identifies Smithfield Conservation Park as a high-priority management area requiring proactive and regular management. High levels of visitor use – particularly by mountain bike riders – are acknowledged, and the provision of a substantial network of recreational and competition trails, including nationally and internationally recognised tracks, is identified as a defining characteristic of the park. Routine inspections focus on recreation management and protection of natural values.

The Statement confirms that both recreational and competition mountain biking are supported uses and that a high level of infrastructure and wayfinding is provided to support safe and sustainable use. Ongoing engagement with community stakeholders forms part of park management.

Management of the park is underpinned by protection of environmental and cultural values. The park contains 11 regional ecosystems, including ecosystems with endangered and “of concern” biodiversity status, and supports species of conservation significance. Cultural heritage is recognised as integral to the park, with all activities subject to duty of care obligations under the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* and ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners.

The Management Statement also identifies fire and pest management as key priorities and confirms that park assets are maintained to protect visitor safety and park values. It notes that the Cairns Mountain Bike Club manages part of the trail network under a Section 34 agreement of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, and that restricted access areas and permit requirements apply to protect sensitive resources, including for competition use.

Masterplan Implications

The Smithfield Conservation Park Management Statement provides the primary site-specific management framework for the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Extension Masterplan and confirms that mountain biking is a core and intended use of the park within a managed conservation context.

For the Masterplan, the Management Statement reinforces the need to:

- align trail expansion and upgrades with the park's stated purpose and high-priority management status;
- demonstrate safe and sustainable use while protecting environmental and cultural values;
- respond to sensitive ecosystems through careful siting, staging, and design;
- embed cultural heritage duty of care and early engagement with Traditional Owners;
- acknowledge existing governance arrangements, including the Section 34 agreement with Cairns Mountain Bike Club; and
- design trail networks and infrastructure consistent with proactive management, regular maintenance, and high visitor use.

Cairns Active Transport Strategy - Cairns Regional Council (2020)

The *Cairns Active Transport Strategy* establishes CRC's strategic framework for planning, delivering, and managing a region-wide network of walking and cycling infrastructure. The Strategy seeks to support Council's broader vision of a more active, connected, and healthy community by enabling more people to walk and cycle more often for everyday travel and recreation.

The Strategy focuses primarily on human-powered transport networks within the urban and peri-urban environment, including footpaths, shared paths, on-road bicycle facilities, and off-road commuter and recreational links. It is structured around four key strategies: development of a safe and connected network; provision of supporting infrastructure; encouragement and promotion; and planning walk- and cycle-friendly communities.

The Strategy documents a high level of cycling and walking participation in Cairns, supported by favourable climate and topography, and notes that Cairns has the highest proportion of active transport trips in Queensland. It identifies an extensive existing network (over 660 km of footpaths, shared paths, and on-road bicycle lanes) and commits to continued expansion and improvement of this network through coordinated planning and investment.

Importantly, the Active Transport Strategy sits alongside Council's Recreational Walking Trails Strategy and Mountain Bike Strategy, recognising that these strategies serve different but complementary purposes. While the Active Transport Strategy prioritises safe, connected routes for everyday travel and low-stress recreation, mountain biking is addressed more directly through dedicated recreation and destination-based strategies.

The Strategy emphasises network connectivity, safe access to destinations, integration with land-use planning, and the importance of off-road connections to avoid conflict with traffic. It also promotes monitoring, data collection, and periodic review to ensure infrastructure investment responds to demand and changing community needs.

Masterplan Implications

The Cairns Active Transport Strategy provides an important regional access and connectivity context for the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Extension Masterplan, but it does not directly govern the design of destination-based mountain bike trail networks within a conservation park.

For the Smithfield Masterplan, the Strategy reinforces the need to:

- consider safe and legible connections between the MTB park, surrounding suburbs, and existing or planned shared-use paths;
- integrate trailhead access planning with Council's broader walking and cycling network, particularly where trailheads interface with public roads, paths, or parking;
- prioritise off-road and low-conflict access routes to improve safety and visitor experience for both local riders and visitors; and
- align trailhead design with Council expectations for supporting infrastructure (e.g. bicycle parking, wayfinding, end-of-trip facilities) where interfaces occur on Council-managed land.

While the Active Transport Strategy does not dictate mountain bike trail standards or riding experiences, it supports the Masterplan's emphasis on safe access, network legibility, and integration with regional movement systems, ensuring the Smithfield MTB Park functions as both a destination and a connected part of the broader Cairns active transport network.

Northern Beaches Leisure Trail - Cairns Regional Council / Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads (2026 webpage)

The *Northern Beaches Leisure Trail (NBLT)* is a long-term active transport and recreation project led by CRC in partnership with the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads. When complete, the NBLT will deliver approximately 30 kilometres of continuous off-road walking and cycling infrastructure between Palm Cove and the Cairns CBD, with connections into northern beaches suburbs. The project is recognised by TMR as a principal route within the Queensland Government's Principal Cycling Network Plan and is supported by Council's Active Transport Strategy and CairnsPlan 2016.

The NBLT is being delivered in stages, with substantial sections already completed along the northern beaches foreshore, including Palm Cove, Clifton Beach, Kewarra Beach, Trinity Beach, Yorkeys Knob, Holloways Beach, and Machans Beach. The trail provides a fully off-road alternative to cycling and walking along high-risk sections of the Captain Cook Highway, significantly improving safety and accessibility for a broad range of users, including families, commuters, and visitors.

The project is positioned as both an active transport corridor and an iconic leisure and tourism asset. Council estimates that, once completed, the NBLT will generate approximately 72,750 additional visitor nights per annum through increased event attraction, cycle tourism, improved connectivity between destinations, and enhanced visitor amenity. Economic analysis indicates a strong benefit-cost ratio for completed stages, reinforcing the project's value as regional infrastructure.

The NBLT also supports broader community outcomes, including improved health and wellbeing, reduced traffic congestion on the Captain Cook Highway, safer routes for school travel, and enhanced access to foreshore and environmental attractions such as Cattana Wetlands and Earl Hill.

Masterplan Implications

The Northern Beaches Leisure Trail provides a critical regional access and connectivity context for the Smithfield Mountain Bike Park Extension Masterplan.

For the Smithfield Masterplan, the NBLT reinforces the need to:

- plan safe, off-road access routes between the MTB park and surrounding suburbs, reducing reliance on the Captain Cook Highway;
- integrate trailhead planning with existing and planned NBLT connections, particularly where trailheads interface with Council-managed land;
- support ride-in / ride-out access for local riders and visitors, improving accessibility and reducing vehicle demand at trailheads;
- consider wayfinding, signage, and legibility between the NBLT and MTB trailheads to improve visitor experience; and
- recognise Smithfield's role as a complementary destination within a broader regional walking and cycling network that supports both recreation and tourism.

While the NBLT is not designed for mountain bike trail use, it provides essential enabling infrastructure that strengthens the accessibility, safety, and economic performance of the Smithfield MTB Park and should be explicitly considered in trailhead siting and access planning.

Cairns Mountain Bike Club – Smithfield MTB Park User Survey (2025)

QPWS Analysis of CMBC Survey Results (June 2025)

The *Cairns Mountain Bike Club Smithfield MTB Park User Survey* was conducted in June 2025 to capture rider preferences, priorities, and expectations in relation to the proposed expansion of Smithfield Mountain Bike Park. The survey was developed and administered by the Cairns Mountain Bike Club, with results analysed and summarised for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships. The survey received 311 responses, representing a substantial and engaged sample of the Smithfield riding community.

Purpose and structure of the survey

The survey was designed to inform planning decisions by identifying:

- preferred trailhead locations and trailhead services;
- preferred trail types and riding experiences;
- attitudes to shuttle services and access;
- factors influencing rider engagement with the trail network;
- perceived priorities for the Cairns Mountain Bike Club; and
- community expectations for the Smithfield MTB Park expansion.

Questions used a ranked-response format (Top 3 or Top 5), allowing analysis of both overall preference and first-rank priority. Open-ended responses were also collected, providing qualitative insight into rider values, concerns, and aspirations.

Key findings

Trailhead location and services

The survey identified the Crankworx site as the preferred primary trailhead location. The most important trailhead services were toilets, an inclusive skills park catering to all levels, and parking for local users. Toilets and skills facilities received the strongest first-rank preferences.

Trail types and riding experience

Respondents showed a strong preference for intermediate trails with optional difficulty, followed by flow trails. Open-ended responses highlighted a desire for variety across trail difficulty, style, and features, alongside retention of Smithfield's established raw and technical character. Many respondents emphasised that new trails should not detract from or replace older legacy trails.

Shuttle services and access

Survey results indicate a preference for shuttle services with multiple drop-off locations and good network connectivity. Riders also expressed a preference for weekend coverage and flexibility. While some respondents indicated interest in private vehicle shuttle options, the survey analysis notes that private shuttles will not be permitted within the Conservation Park due to environmental and cultural protection requirements.

Engagement drivers

Riders indicated that engagement with the trail network is driven more strongly by trail variety, suitability to skill level, and convenience of access than by racing or competitive events. Increased engagement with MTB at Smithfield was most strongly associated with increased variety in trail difficulty, trail type, and features.

Maintenance and governance

Maintenance emerged as the dominant priority across the survey. Nearly half of respondents ranked trail maintenance as the number one priority for the Cairns Mountain Bike Club. Qualitative responses consistently emphasised that expanding the network without a credible, ongoing maintenance model would undermine rider experience, safety, and long-term sustainability. Many respondents noted that reliance on a volunteer-only maintenance model becomes increasingly difficult as the network grows.

Masterplan Implications

The CMBC user survey provides direct evidence of rider priorities and expectations and is a key input to the Smithfield MTB Park Extension Masterplan.

For the Masterplan, the survey reinforces the need to:

- prioritise trailhead location, basic amenities, and skills facilities as core infrastructure rather than optional add-ons;
- design a trail network that emphasises variety and progression, particularly intermediate trails with optional difficulty, while retaining Smithfield’s established technical identity;
- support shuttle operations through network structure and access planning, within the constraints of conservation park management;
- recognise that events are secondary to everyday riding experience for most users;
- treat ongoing trail maintenance and resourcing as a primary design and governance consideration, not a post-delivery issue; and
- acknowledge limits to volunteer-only maintenance models as network scale and expectations increase.

The survey confirms strong community support for expansion provided it delivers high-quality, well-maintained trails, protects Smithfield’s cultural identity, and is underpinned by a sustainable long-term management approach.