

Transport and Other Legislation (Managing E-mobility Use and Protecting Our Communities) Amendment Bill 2026

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Submission By: Somerset Regional Council

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10 April 2026

Mr Jim McDonald MP
Member for Lockyer
Committee Chair
State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee

Dear Committee Chair,

Subject: Transport and Other Legislation (Managing E-Mobility Use and Protecting Our Communities) Amendment Bill 2026

Introduction

Somerset Regional Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the Transport and Other Legislation (Managing E-Mobility Use and Protecting Our Communities) Amendment Bill 2026 (the Bill). Council supports the overarching intent of the legislation to improve safety outcomes associated with e-mobility devices and to address the growing risks posed by illegal and non-compliant electric motorbikes in public spaces.

However, Council has significant concerns regarding the unintended consequences of the Bill when applied uniformly across all environments, particularly in regional, off-road recreational settings such as the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT), and regarding the practical and financial impost the Bill may place on local government enforcement responsibilities. Several aspects of the proposed framework imply expanded expectations for local governments in relation to speed management, signage, compliance monitoring and public education, without clear allocation of responsibility, operational guidance or dedicated funding. In large regional jurisdictions, these requirements present practical challenges and costs to councils that do not have the specialist capacity or resources to enforce complex and evolving technical compliance standards.

The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail is Australia's longest rail trail, extending approximately 161 kilometres through Ipswich, Somerset, South Burnett and Toowoomba regions. It represents a substantial public investment of approximately \$46 million by Commonwealth, State and Local governments and has become one of Queensland's most successful regional tourism assets.

Council's concerns are informed by extensive engagement with local communities, tourism operators, and particularly the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Users Association (BVRTUA), which is the peak user and advocacy body for the trail. BVRTUA

represents cyclists (including e-bike riders), walkers, runners, horse riders, event organisers and tourism operators, and has provided detailed evidence on the likely impacts of the Bill on trail use, regional tourism, and the practicalities of regulation in off-road recreational environments.

Importance of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail to Somerset Region

The BVRT attracts tens of thousands of visitors annually and delivers significant benefits to Somerset communities, including:

- Direct expenditure on accommodation, food, retail and transport
- Support for small businesses and local employment
- Improved health and wellbeing outcomes
- Increased participation in active recreation by older residents and people with disabilities

Approximately 50% of BVRT users now ride e-bikes, reflecting broader national and international trends in accessible active tourism. The trail is fully e-bike-friendly, with charging facilities available in every township along its length. BVRTUA advises that e-bikes have become essential to the viability of multi-day trail experiences, particularly for older riders, families and people returning to physical activity.

Distinguishing Legal E-Bikes from Illegal Electric Motorbikes

Somerset Regional Council strongly supports enforcement action against illegal electric motorbikes, which are high-powered, non-compliant devices frequently used dangerously in public areas.

However, Council is concerned that the Bill does not sufficiently distinguish between illegal motorbikes and compliant EN15194 Electric Power Assisted Bicycles (EPACs). Riders of compliant e-bikes are not the primary source of safety concern, yet risk being disproportionately impacted by broad regulatory measures aimed at addressing illegal devices.

10 km/h Speed Limit on Shared Paths

The Bill proposes a uniform 10 km/h speed limit for e-mobility devices on footpaths and shared paths. Somerset Regional Council is concerned that, without clarification, this provision may inadvertently apply to rail trails such as the BVRT.

Rail trails differ fundamentally from suburban footpaths. They are long-distance, off-road corridors specifically designed for cycling at normal riding speeds. Evidence provided by BVRTUA indicates that applying a 10 km/h limit on the BVRT would:

- Reduce stability for riders, particularly on gravel surfaces and in windy conditions
- Increase fatigue and the risk of falls
- Render multi-day tourism itineraries unviable
- Disproportionately disadvantage older riders and people with disabilities
- Prevent safe social riding with conventional bicycles

Council also notes evidence cited by BVRTUA from TMR technical guidance indicating that bicycles can become unstable at speeds below approximately 11 km/h.

Council recommends that the Bill be amended to:

- Explicitly exempt rail trails from the 10 km/h shared-path speed limit; or
- Clarify that rail trails are not considered “shared paths” for the purposes of this provision; or
- Establish a distinct regulatory category for regional recreational trails, reflecting their lower risk, controlled environments.

Without such clarification, the Bill risks unintentionally undermining the safe and effective operation of the BVRT.

Minimum Age Requirement for Riding E-Bikes

The Bill introduces a minimum riding age of 16 years for EPACs.

Somerset Regional Council acknowledges safety concerns regarding young riders in complex traffic environments. However, Council shares BVRTUA’s view that a

uniform age restriction does not appropriately reflect the controlled, car-free nature of the BVRT.

Families are a major user group on the trail, and supervised riding by children aged 12–15 on compliant e-bikes is common. BVRTUA advises that the proposed age restriction would:

- Prevent families from riding together
- Exclude youth, school and community groups
- Undermine family-based tourism, one of the trail's strongest markets

Council supports a more balanced approach and recommends:

- Allowing riders of all ages to ride compliant EN15194 e-bikes on designated rail trails when accompanied by a parent or guardian
- Retaining the minimum age of 16 in higher-risk, on-road and urban environments

Driver Licence Requirement

The Bill proposes that riders of e-bikes and PMDs hold a valid driver licence.

Council is concerned this requirement would create unnecessary barriers for:

- International visitors from cycling-centric countries
- Older residents who no longer hold a driver licence
- People with disabilities who rely on e-assist for mobility
- Visitors using off-road recreational trails with no interaction with motor traffic

BVRTUA has advised that requiring a driver licence for riding a bicycle, electric or otherwise, is unprecedented internationally and likely to significantly reduce visitation to the BVRT.

Somerset Regional Council supports the position that riders of compliant EN15194 e-bikes should not be required to hold a driver licence, particularly in off-road recreational settings.

Local Government Enforcement Requirements

Somerset Regional Council is concerned that several elements of the proposed legislation and associated recommendations imply expanded enforcement responsibilities for local government without corresponding resourcing or clarity of role. As outlined in the Parliamentary Inquiry recommendations, local governments may be expected to support or implement reduced speed limits on shared paths, install and maintain additional regulatory signage, regulate e-mobility behaviour through local laws, manage designated parking areas, and respond to community complaints and compliance queries. In large, regional jurisdictions such as Somerset, which includes extensive off-road recreation infrastructure like the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, these enforcement expectations present practical challenges. Council considers that education, signage and targeted state-led enforcement should be prioritised in low-risk, off-road recreational environments, with any additional regulatory obligations on local government accompanied by appropriate guidance and resourcing.

Conclusion

Somerset Regional Council supports the intent of the Bill to improve community safety and address illegal e-mobility devices. However, it is critical that the legislation also recognises and protects the significant economic and community value generated by compliant e-bike use in regional areas.

The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail is not only a recreational asset, it is a key tourism and economic driver for the Somerset Region. The trail attracts visitors from across Queensland and beyond, many of whom rely on e-bikes to access and fully experience the corridor. This visitation underpins a growing network of local cafes, accommodation providers and tourism operators, supporting small businesses, local jobs and broader regional economic activity.

Any regulatory settings that inadvertently restrict access to compliant e-bikes risk having direct and unintended consequences for these businesses and the sustainability of the regional tourism economy. The impacts of the Bill therefore extend beyond transport regulation and into the economic and social fabric of the Somerset community.

Council encourages the Queensland Government to adopt a risk-based, regionally sensitive approach that:

- Clearly distinguishes legal e-bikes from illegal electric motorbikes

- Preserves access to major regional tourism assets
- Supports family participation, accessibility and healthy lifestyles
- Protects regional economic activity and local appointment

Council thanks the Committee for the opportunity to make this submission and would welcome further engagement on the specific impacts of the Bill on the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail within the Somerset Region.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Johnson
Chief Executive Officer