

Kalaru to Bega Bike Path Feasibility Design Study

Community Consultation Report



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BTSR	Bega Tathra Safe Ride
BVSC	Bega Valley Shire Council
HYS	Have Your Say

1 INTRODUCTION

Bega Valley Shire Council (BVSC) is undertaking a study investigating the feasibility of providing a bike path between the townships of Kalaru and Bega. As part of the study, BVSC developed four distinct route alignment options to respond to the various opportunities and constraints along the corridor. In late July 2021, BVSC released these route options for public review and comment alongside a short survey to capture community feedback on the options. These route options are provided in Appendix 1.

2 WHO WE CONSULTED WITH

Consultation on the draft route alignment options and completion of the accompanying survey was open to everyone, including residents and organisations outside of the Shire. This consultation period ran from 28 July to 18 August 2021. The alignments and survey were publicly released on Council’s *Have Your Say* (HYS) online platform and supported by a social media campaign to promote the release and encourage the community to provide feedback. BVSC posted on Council’s Facebook page five times over the three week consultation period to further promote the release and encourage the provision of feedback via the survey, as well as issuing a media release and promoting the consultation period in the Bega Valley Together newsletter.

Additionally, BVSC undertook targeted consultation with landowners along the corridor and sought feedback from key bicycle groups including Bega Tathra Safe Ride and Bicycle NSW.

3 WHAT WE ASKED

A short survey, consisting of 10 questions, was released on the HYS platform alongside the draft alignment options. This survey provided insight into the background of respondents (e.g. age, location, type of bike rider), their motivations for riding a bike (e.g. for recreation, to get to work or school), the potential future usage of a path if provided, the level of support for each option, and ideas for further consideration when refining or implementing the options. These questions and the available answer choices are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Survey questions and answer choices

SURVEY QUESTION	SURVEY ANSWER CHOICES
Q1. What age group do you belong to?	15 and under / 15-24 / 25-34 / 35-44 / 45-54 / 55-64 / 65-plus.
Q2. Are you a Bega Valley Shire resident?	Yes / No.
Q3. If you answered ‘Yes’ to Q2, what area of the Bega Valley do you currently live in?	Jellat Jellat / Kalaru / Tathra / Other (please specify).
Q4. If you answered ‘No’ to Q2, where do you reside?	Free text response.
Q5. What best describes you when it comes to riding a bike?	Fearless – I’ll ride on road regardless of traffic conditions and without designated cycle facilities (e.g. cycle lane, path) / Confident – I’m comfortable riding on road but would prefer to have a designated cycle facility (e.g. cycle lane, path) / Interested – I’m interested in cycling but would only do so if I was separated from vehicle traffic (e.g. path) / Not interested or able – I’m not interested and/or able to ride a bike - please skip to Question 7.
Q6. In order of frequency, what are your reasons for riding a bike?	Recreation/exercise / To get to work / To get to school / To get to the shops / To accompany my kids / Other (please specify).

SURVEY QUESTION	SURVEY ANSWER CHOICES
Q7. If it was provided, how much would you use a walk/cycle path between Kalaru and Bega? This could include walking or cycling the full length of the path or just a part of it.	At least once a day / A few times a week / A few times a month / A few times a year / Not at all.
Q8. From the path alignment options presented, which would you prefer?	None of the options / Option 1 / Option 2 / Option 3 / Option 4 / A combination of the options (please specify).
Q9. Do you have any further thoughts or comments regarding the project?	Free text response.
Q10. Name and contact details (optional)	Name / Company / Address / Address 2 / City/Town / State/Province / ZIP/Postal Code / Country / Email Address / Phone Number.

4 WHAT WAS SAID

Over the three week consultation period, a total of 247 surveys were completed and 143 free text comments were provided on the draft route alignment options. A snapshot of key findings from an analysis of the survey responses is provided in Figure 1 and discussed below.

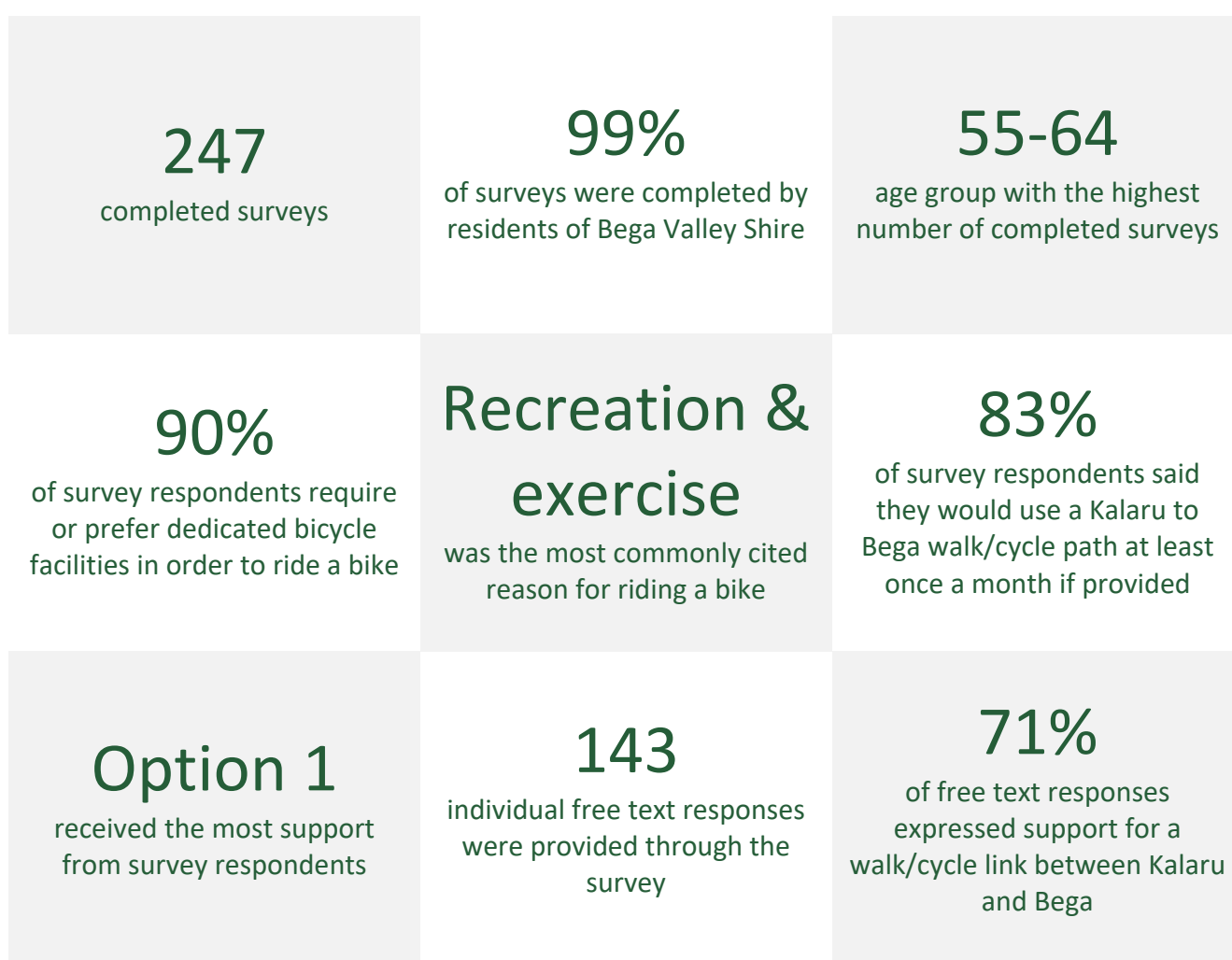


Figure 1: Snapshot of survey key findings

4.1 BICYCLE RIDER CHARACTERISTICS

Roughly 45% of survey respondents identified as being interested in riding a bike in the Bega Valley Shire but unlikely to do so due to concerns about safety, particularly in relation to vehicle traffic. As can be seen in Figure 2, this proportion is generally consistent with that for New South Wales more broadly. In order to address the concerns of this rider type, it is important that any proposed cycle facility focuses on safety and provides separation from cars, direct routes, and access to information such as wayfinding. It is expected that by designing for these types of riders, the cycle infrastructure would generally also meet the needs of the remaining 49% of more experienced and confident riders in the Shire.

According to the survey, only 6% of respondents identified as being uninterested and/or unable to ride a bike ('no way, no how') which is significantly less than that for New South Wales more broadly. Based on these findings, there appears to be a strong existing rider base within the Bega Valley Shire and a significant opportunity to increase ridership in the future if suitable cycle infrastructure is provided.

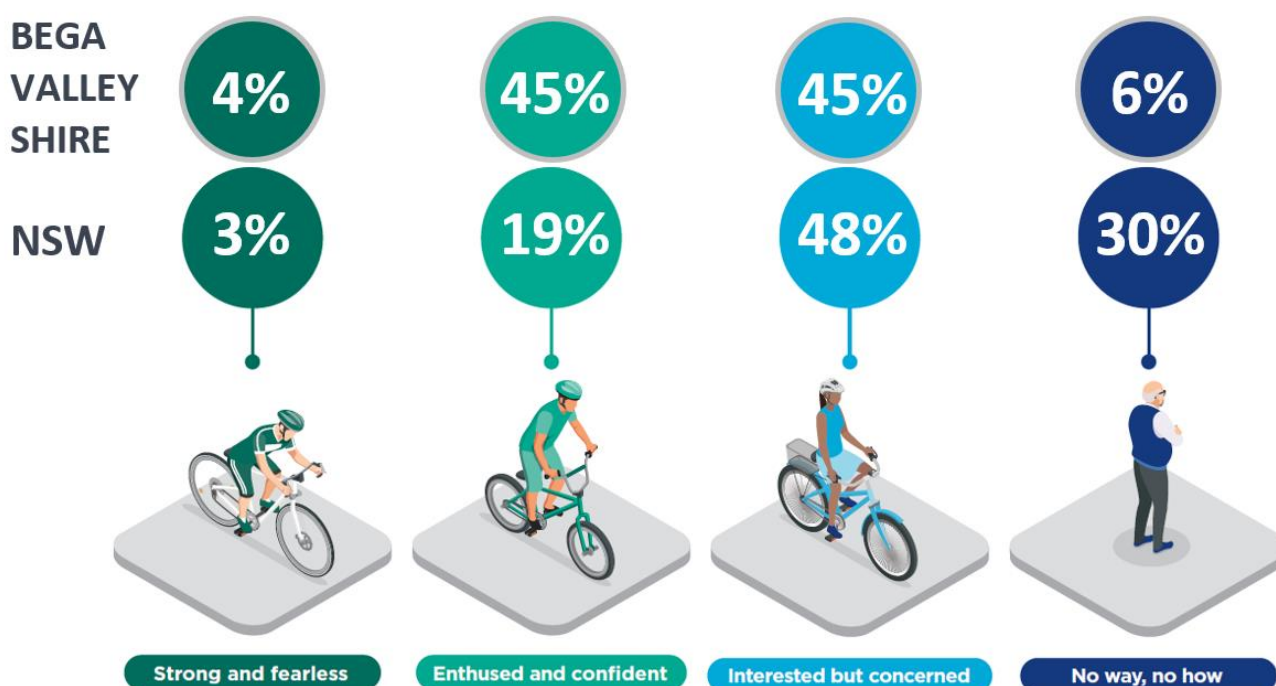


Figure 2: Classification of survey respondents into the four types of bicycle riders (adapted from Transport for New South Wales 'Cycleway Design Toolbox')

Of the survey respondents who currently ride, the main reason in terms of frequency of journey was for recreation/exercise (66%). This was followed by parents or caregivers riding to accompany children (24%), and those riding to get to work (18%). The reason least cited in terms of frequency of journey was for children riding to school, which is unsurprising given the low number of surveys completed by those aged 24 and under. Specifically, only four surveys were completed by residents in the 15-24 age group while no surveys were completed by residents aged 15 and under.

These results suggest that the route alignment and design treatment of a bike path between Kalaru and Bega should prioritise the needs of recreational cyclists and children above commuters. This would typically include a greater emphasis on amenity (including visual appeal), safety, separation from vehicle traffic, connectivity with other recreational paths or points of interest, and the provision of supporting facilities such as shade, rest stops and drinking fountains.

4.2 POTENTIAL PATH USAGE

According to the survey findings, over 80% of respondents stated that if it was provided they would use a walk/cycle path between Kalaru and Bega (either fully or partially) at least once a month. As can be seen in Figure 3, this is comprised of 37% of respondents who stated that they would use the path a few times a month, 37% who stated that they would use the path a few times a week, and 9% who stated that they would use the path at least once a day. 10% of respondents stated that they would only use the path a few times a year while the remaining 7% would not use it at all.

Although this survey question provides an indication of future intent, the findings suggest that there is existing community support for a walk/cycle path between Kalaru and Bega and that regular usage could be expected along all or part of the path if provided. It should be noted that with 99% of survey responses completed by residents of the Bega Shire, this is a reflection of local preferences and does not account for the potential additional usage by those outside of the Shire which would include the tourist market.

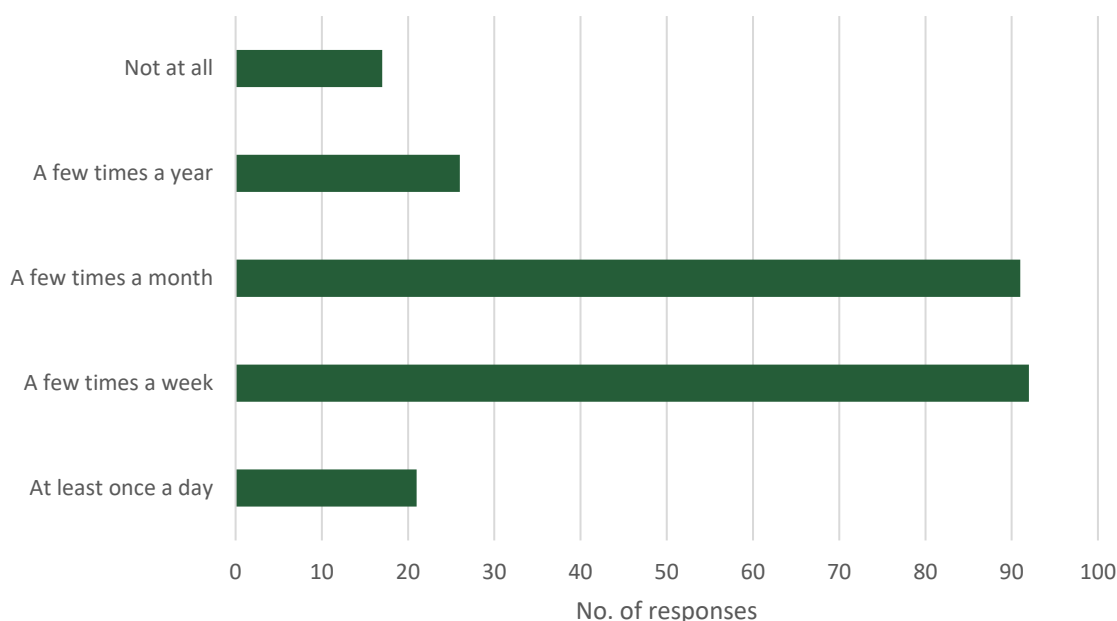


Figure 3: Stated future usage of a walk/cycle path between Kalaru and Bega (Source: BVSC, 2021)

4.3 ROUTE ALIGNMENT OPTION PREFERENCES

Four route alignment options were prepared and released for public comment with the community able to express support for one of the options, for a combination of the options or for none of the options presented. According to the findings from this specific survey question (Question 8), Option 1 and Option 4 received equal support as the preferred option with 31% of the vote each. Options 2 and 3 were comparatively unpopular, receiving 3% and 11% of the votes respectively. The remaining 24% of the vote was spread between respondents desirous of a combination of different aspects of two or more options (20%) and respondents who did not support any of the options presented (4%).

To improve the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the findings and help identify a preferred route alignment option, the free text responses provided in Question 8 and 9 were reviewed. Through this review, Options 1 and 4 again garnered the most support, but with amendments to their alignments. Some of the common amendments that were noted included the removal of a path detour to the hospital and the need to ensure that road crossings were limited in order to improve safety. The additional support for the different options contained within the free text responses should be interpreted with caution as a number of the comments expressed support for individual sections of an alignment, rather than full support for an entire alignment option.

Notwithstanding, the combination of the stated preferences from Question 8 and the findings from the review of free text responses in Question 8 and 9 provided a fuller picture of support for each option. As can be seen in Figure 4, Option 1 received the highest level of support across the four options with 42% of the vote. The main concerns raised with Option 4 were the steep inclines on Henry Taylor Road and Ike Game Road and the detour past the hospital.

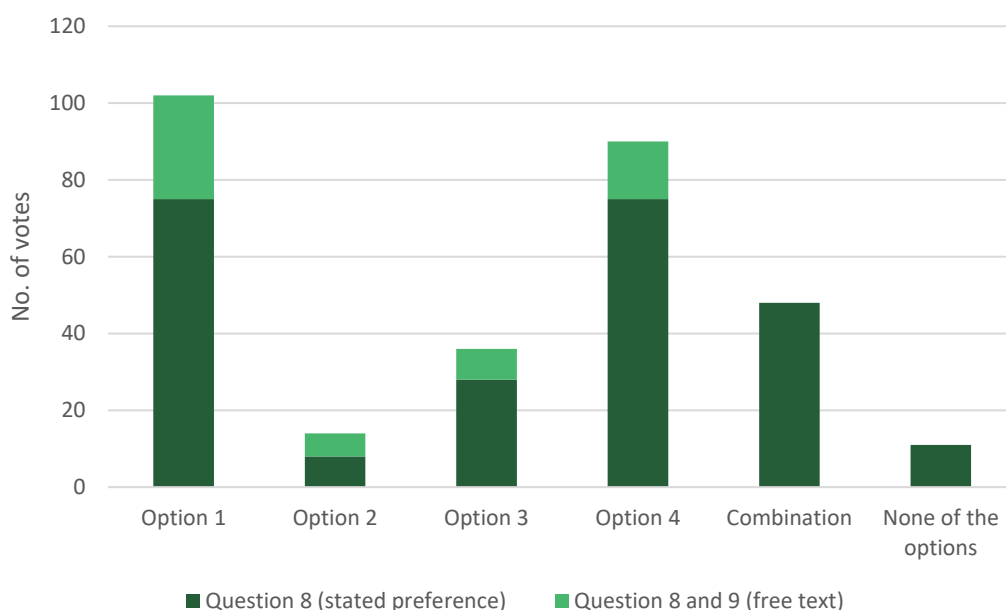


Figure 4: Community support for each route alignment option (Source: BVSC, 2021)

4.4 COMMENTS

4.4.1 Survey

Each of the 143 free text responses provided in Question 9 were reviewed and analysed to understand the level of support for the project, identify key recurring themes, and better understand community concerns.

As can be seen in Figure 5, analysis of the free text responses indicated that there was overwhelming community support for the provision of a walk/cycle path between Kalaru and Bega, regardless of the alignment.

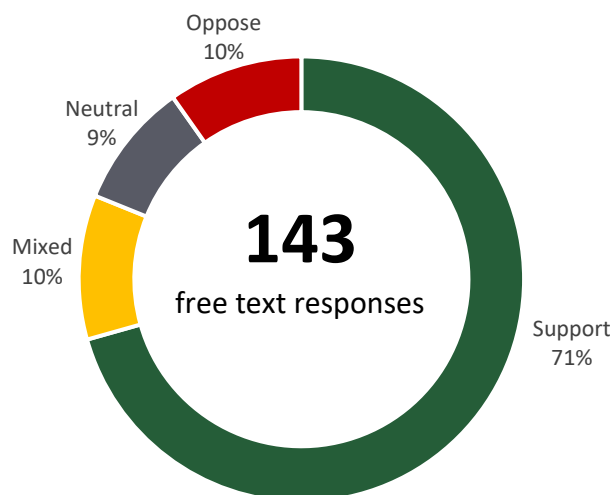


Figure 5: Community support for a walk/cycle path between Kalaru and Bega (Source: BVSC, 2021)

As can be seen in Figure 6, *safety* was the most common theme in the free text responses, accounting for 19% of all feedback received. This was followed by responses relating to *cost* and *crossings* (each with 12%), *amenity* and *connections* (each with 11%), and *gradients* and *tourism* (each with 7%).

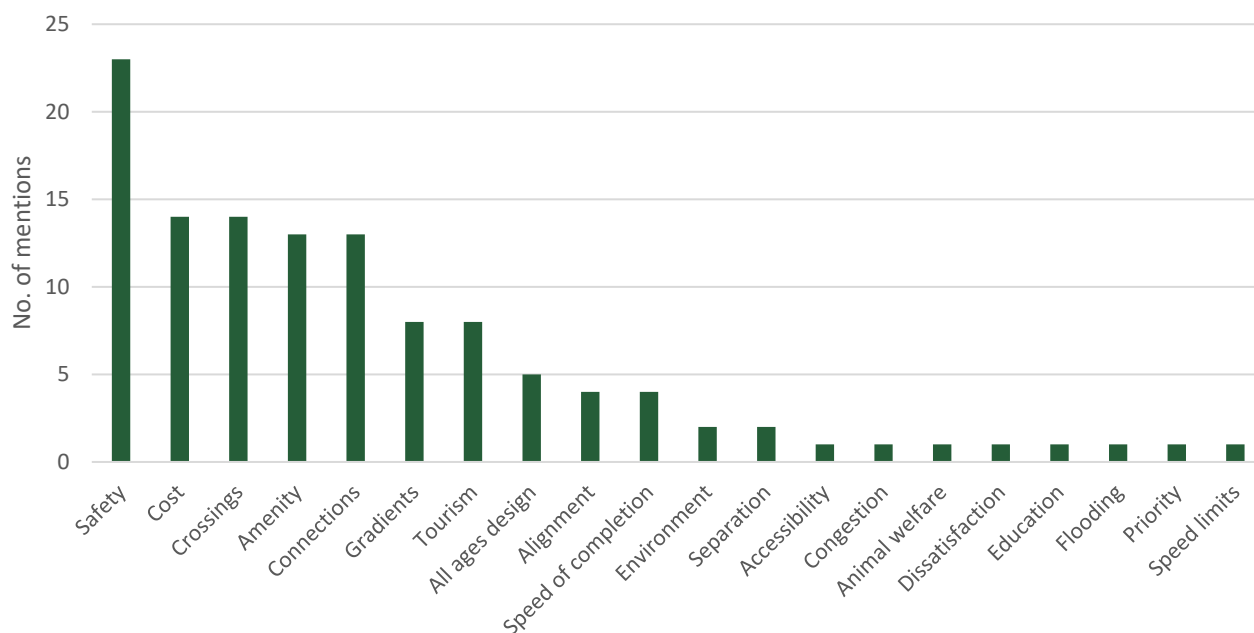


Figure 6: Classification of free text responses by theme (Source: BVSC, 2021)

Key comments from the top seven free text responses include:

- **Safety** – comments focused on the relative safety of different options compared with the others, as well as the perceived improvements in safety from installing a separated path generally.
- **Cost** – for comments which opposed the project, cost was most frequently cited as the primary concern, with many suggesting more appropriate areas for use of Council funds.
- **Crossings** – there was a general opposition to including road crossings in the path alignment, with most of the comments that referenced them citing safety as a concern. As a result, comments typically called for little to no crossings of major roads and intersections.
- **Amenity** – a number of respondents proposed changes to improve overall amenity of the path, including lighting provisions, rest stops, and alignments along Bega River or similar to provide scenic views and/or shade.
- **Connections** – comments primarily related to the need for connections to locations or points of interest not currently provided for in the proposed alignments, such as Merimbula and Mogareeka.
- **Gradients** – comments relating to gradients were almost entirely associated with Option 4. It was suggested that the steep incline on Henry Taylor Road and Ike Game Road would discourage young or less fit cyclists from using the path.
- **Tourism** – this theme was cited as a positive potential outcome, with respondents stating that the path could be a boon for the local area by attracting tourists.

4.4.2 Landowners

A total of 46 letters were distributed to landowners along the Kalaru to Bega corridor. Of these, three responses were received. The key findings from these responses included:

- All respondents expressed support for the project and advised that Option 4 was undesirable
- Two respondents identified Option 1 as their preferred route alignment option
- One respondent identified Option 3 as their preferred route alignment option
- One respondent advised that a crossing over Tathra Road on the western approach to the Jellat bends should be avoided if possible
- One respondent advised that a path along the Jellat Flats was urgently needed to address concerns around cyclist safety.

4.4.3 Bicycle NSW

Bicycle NSW, the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW, submitted a response in support of the proposed Kalaru to Bega bike path project. Key findings from the submission included:

- Identification of Option 1 as their preferred route alignment option overall
- Recognition that the optimum route may involve elements of all four alignments depending on landowner issues, service locations, etc.
- The need for connections to the paths along the Bega River at the north of the Bega township
- Opposition for a path detour past the hospital
- Recommendation that the path is separated entirely from vehicles and based on all-ages design.

4.4.4 Bega Tathra Safe Ride

Bega Tathra Safe Ride (BTSR), a local cycling advocacy group that has advocated for a Bega to Tathra cycleway since 2015, submitted a comprehensive response to the proposed route option alignments. Key findings from the submission included:

- Identification of Option 1 as the most desirable option overall
- Incorporation of Option 4, Inset 1 (i.e. a path on the eastern side of East Street and Tathra Road) in the Option 1 alignment to better connect with the Bega township
- Endorsement of Bicycle NSW's submission, particularly in relation to path separation and all-ages design.

4.4.5 Social media

Finally, a total of 176 comments were provided by the community on BVSC's Facebook page in relation to the proposed Kalaru to Bega bike path project. The key findings and recurring themes identified from an analysis of these comments included:

- A general lack of support for the project, mostly due to cost concerns and a belief that Council funds and attention should be directed to other locations in the Shire and other areas of Council responsibility
- Support for a structure to improve flood immunity along the Jellat Flats, such as an elevated bridge
- Concern that speed limits on the roads within the study area would be reduced as a result of the project.

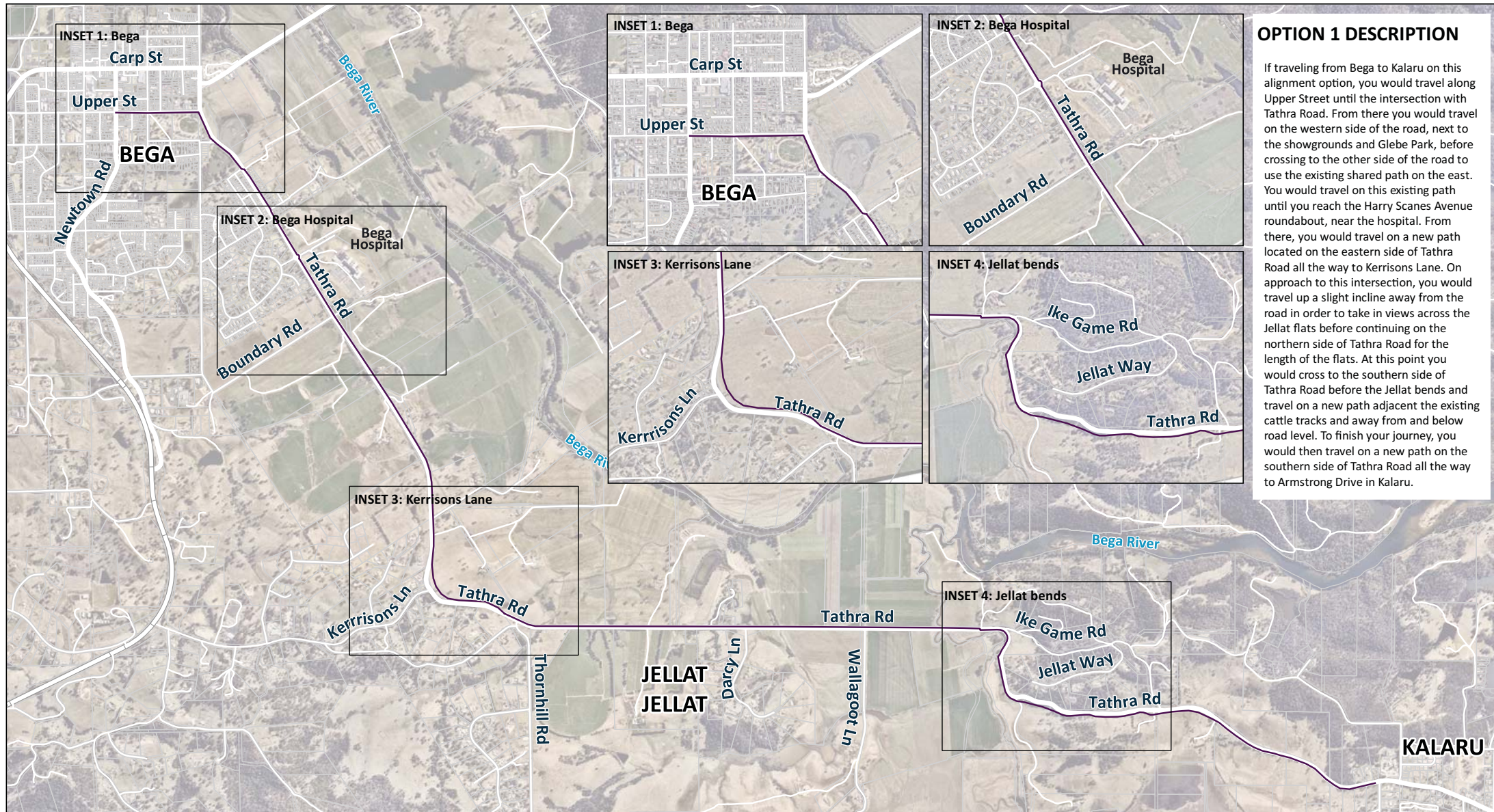
It should be noted that the community comments on BVSC's Facebook page were provided in addition to, and outside of, the formal process (i.e. the survey) which was adopted to capture community feedback on the proposed Kalaru to Bega bike path project. This survey was accompanied by supporting materials to provide greater context for the project. As a result, there is a risk that some community comments on BVSC's Facebook page in relation to the project may have been provided without reference to these materials, and therefore without a full appreciation of the project. These comments should therefore contribute to an understanding of community sentiment and be viewed as a complement to, rather than a replacement of, the formal consultation process. Many of the concerns raised in the social media responses, particularly around specific alignments, design treatments and funding mechanisms, are expected to be addressed in future stages of the project.

5 NEXT STEPS

Further public consultation is planned as the Kalaru to Bega bike path project is progressed and additional detail is developed in the future. This will provide an opportunity for a wider cross-section of the community, particularly Indigenous groups, young people, and people who live with a disability, to help shape this important community asset.

APPENDIX 1: ROUTE OPTIONS

AP01

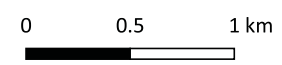


OPTION 1 DESCRIPTION

If traveling from Bega to Kalaru on this alignment option, you would travel along Upper Street until the intersection with Tathra Road. From there you would travel on the western side of the road, next to the showgrounds and Glebe Park, before crossing to the other side of the road to use the existing shared path on the east. You would travel on this existing path until you reach the Harry Scanes Avenue roundabout, near the hospital. From there, you would travel on a new path located on the eastern side of Tathra Road all the way to Kerrisons Lane. On approach to this intersection, you would travel up a slight incline away from the road in order to take in views across the Jellat flats before continuing on the northern side of Tathra Road for the length of the flats. At this point you would cross to the southern side of Tathra Road before the Jellat bends and travel on a new path adjacent the existing cattle tracks and away from and below road level. To finish your journey, you would then travel on a new path on the southern side of Tathra Road all the way to Armstrong Drive in Kalaru.



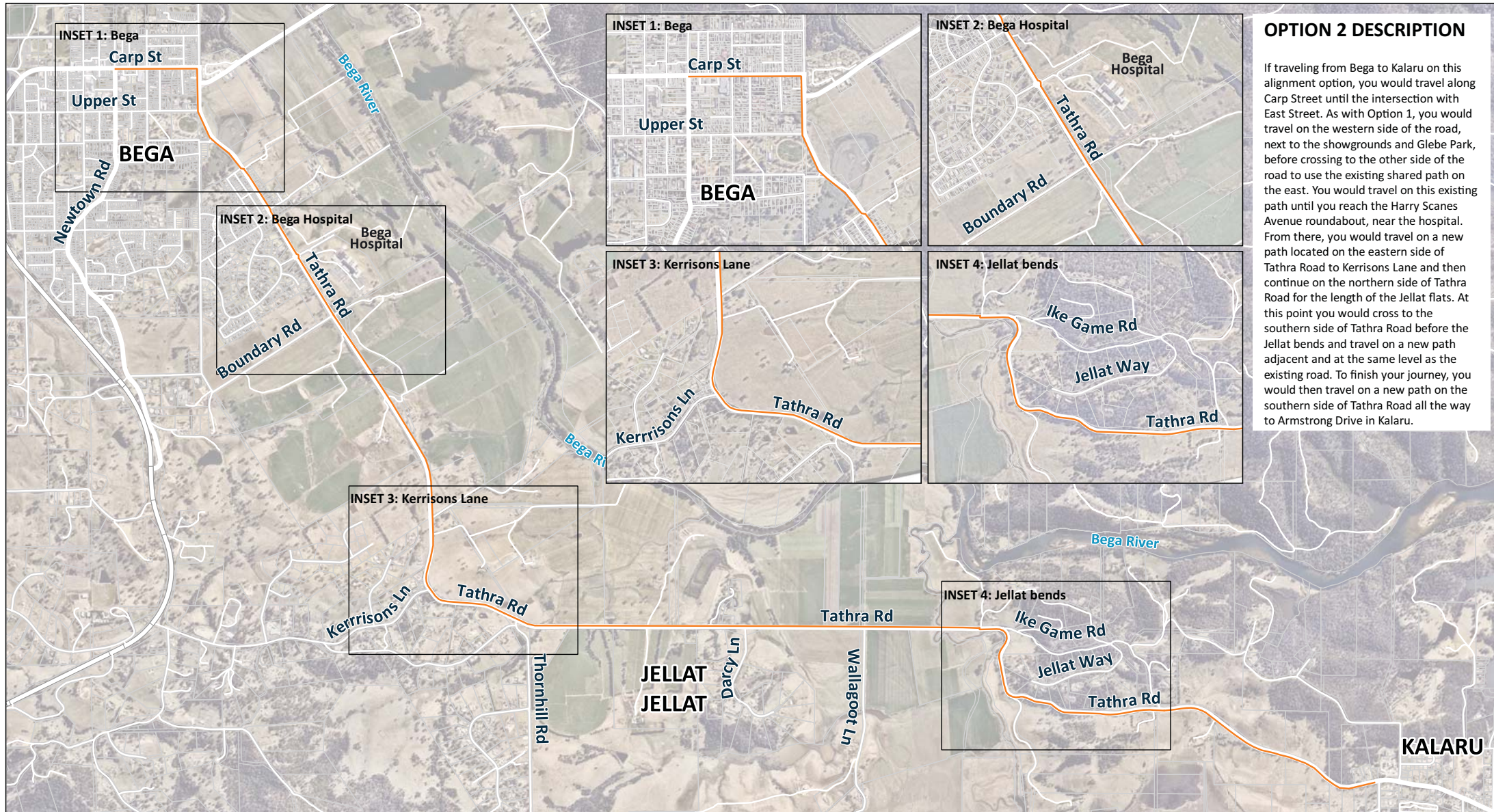
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Map 3a: Option 1

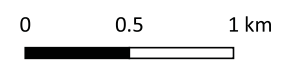


OPTION 2 DESCRIPTION

If traveling from Bega to Kalaru on this alignment option, you would travel along Carp Street until the intersection with East Street. As with Option 1, you would travel on the western side of the road, next to the showgrounds and Glebe Park, before crossing to the other side of the road to use the existing shared path on the east. You would travel on this existing path until you reach the Harry Scanes Avenue roundabout, near the hospital. From there, you would travel on a new path located on the eastern side of Tathra Road to Kerrisons Lane and then continue on the northern side of Tathra Road for the length of the Jellat flats. At this point you would cross to the southern side of Tathra Road before the Jellat bends and travel on a new path adjacent and at the same level as the existing road. To finish your journey, you would then travel on a new path on the southern side of Tathra Road all the way to Armstrong Drive in Kalaru.



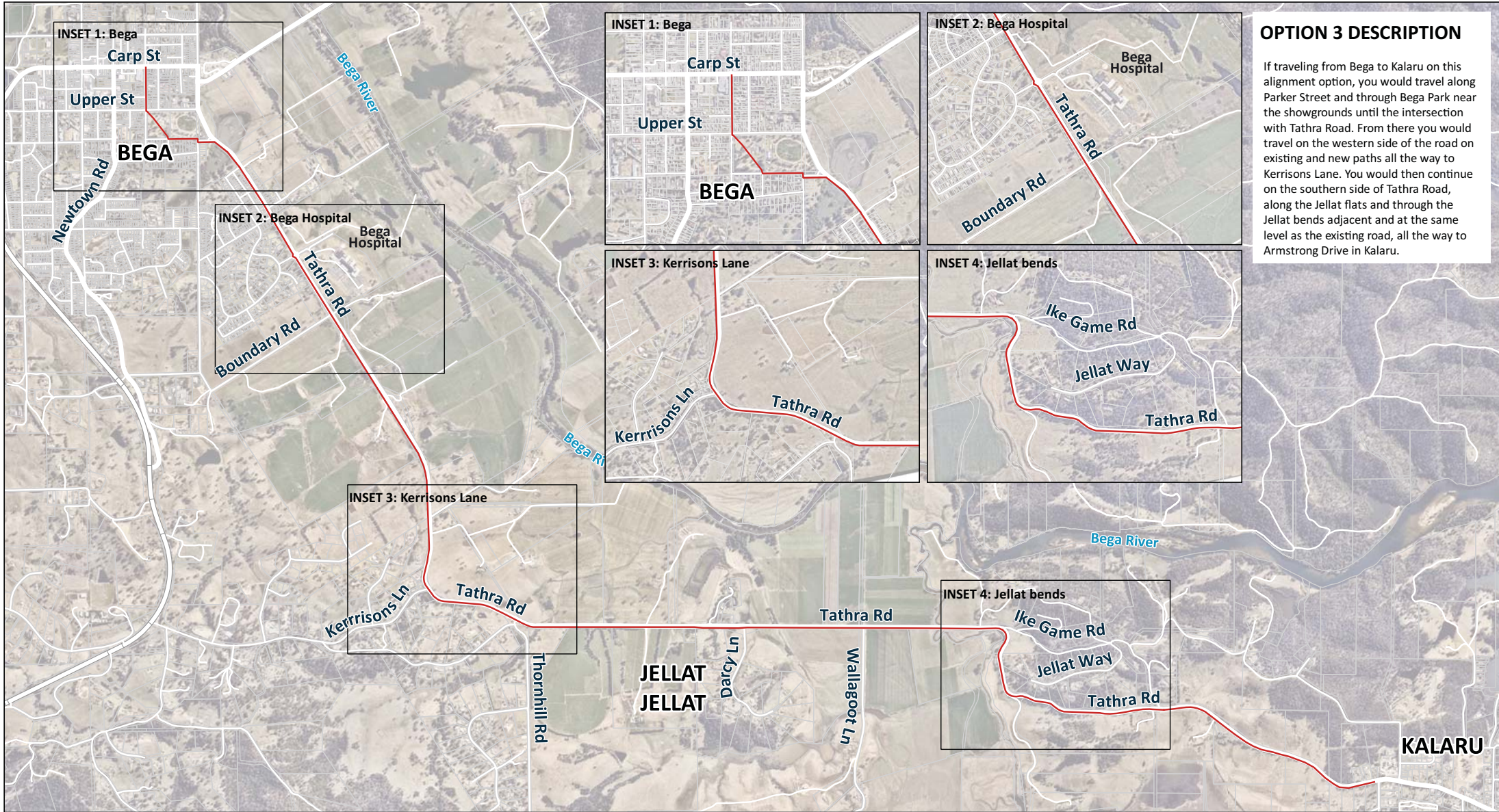
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Map 3b: Option 2

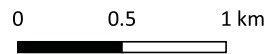


OPTION 3 DESCRIPTION

If traveling from Bega to Kalaru on this alignment option, you would travel along Parker Street and through Bega Park near the showgrounds until the intersection with Tathra Road. From there you would travel on the western side of the road on existing and new paths all the way to Kerrisons Lane. You would then continue on the southern side of Tathra Road, along the Jellat flats and through the Jellat bends adjacent and at the same level as the existing road, all the way to Armstrong Drive in Kalaru.



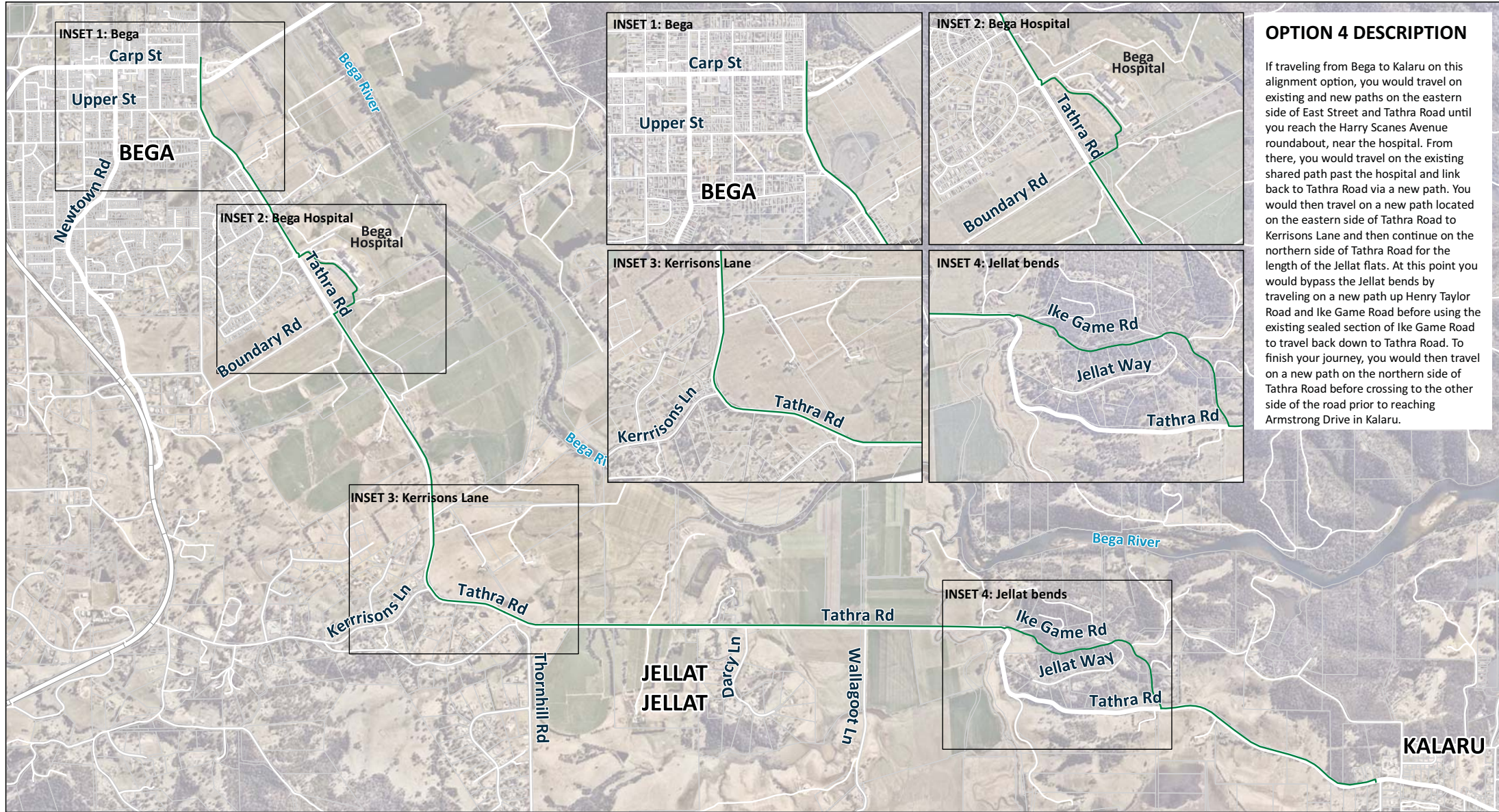
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Map 3c: Option 3

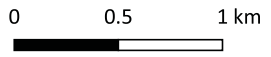


OPTION 4 DESCRIPTION

If traveling from Bega to Kalaru on this alignment option, you would travel on existing and new paths on the eastern side of East Street and Tathra Road until you reach the Harry Scanes Avenue roundabout, near the hospital. From there, you would travel on the existing shared path past the hospital and link back to Tathra Road via a new path. You would then travel on a new path located on the eastern side of Tathra Road to Kerrisons Lane and then continue on the northern side of Tathra Road for the length of the Jellat flats. At this point you would bypass the Jellat bends by traveling on a new path up Henry Taylor Road and Ike Game Road before using the existing sealed section of Ike Game Road to travel back down to Tathra Road. To finish your journey, you would then travel on a new path on the northern side of Tathra Road before crossing to the other side of the road prior to reaching Armstrong Drive in Kalaru.



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Map 3d: Option 4