



**ROAD MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW
COMMITTEE REPORT
2021**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared to provide information and advice to Council, summarising the findings and recommendations of the Road Management Plan Review Committee and for Council to note and adopt the results of this review undertaken of its Road Management Plan 2019 (Version 6).

2. RATIONALE

The purpose of the *Road Management Act 2004* is to reform the law in relation to road management in Victoria. It establishes principles relating to the management of roads by Road Authorities and sets out the rights and duties of road users. The Act imposes several specific obligations on Council as a “Road Authority”. Council is required to establish appropriate asset management practices for its asset portfolio and needs to define and apply targets for asset maintenance. These include:

- Establishing appropriate and affordable condition standards;
- Identifying and assessing needs and setting priorities; and
- Allocating public money to meet those needs and priorities.

These standards and targets may be included in a Road Management Plan and the plan may be used as evidence of the reasonableness of a road authority’s position. The intention of the plan is to communicate with the community on Council’s responsibility for the management, maintenance and repair of the assets forming the road network, footpath & trail network and related infrastructure.

The existing Road Management Plan 2019 (Version 6) was adopted by Council on 2 October 2019 (R250/19). Section 54 of the *Road Management Act 2004* and Part 3 of the *Road Management (General) Regulations 2016* require Council to conduct regular reviews of its Road Management Plan. The current review was completed on 16 February 2021.

The purpose of this review includes: updating the plan to meet current organisational resources; redefining and clarifying Councils’ obligations under the Act; and undertaking an analysis of road inspection frequencies, maintenance intervention levels and response times.

Changes to the plan have been proposed to allow for greater consistency with similar sized Councils, and reviews of intervention response times to allow for greater compliance relative to available resources.

3. REVIEW COMMITTEE

Council’s Risk and Compliance team facilitated a Road Management Plan Review Committee with the express aim of providing all relevant internal stakeholders with the opportunity to discuss and review the RMP6(2019). The Committee meets on a quarterly basis to review Council’s compliance with the plan and discuss any recommended changes.

Committee:

Bridget Wetherall	Director Infrastructure and Environment
Vaughn Notting	Executive Manager Infrastructure
Steve Van Orsouw	Executive Manager Operations and Environment
Luke Ives	Coordinator Road Maintenance

Darren Whitford	Coordinator Risk and Compliance
Brooke Slater	Risk and Insurance Administration Officer
Mathew Morton	Coordinator Asset Management
Georgina Lane	Acting Supervisor Asset Surveillance
Daryl Wallis	Coordinator Parks and Gardens
Ben Ryan	Arborist
Mitch Kemp	Supervisor Arboriculture
Peter Brown	Team Leader Pathways and Drainage
Danny Joyce	Road Maintenance Scheduler

4. SUMMARY

In accordance with the *Road Management Act 2004* (the Act) and the *Road Management (General) Regulations 2016*, Council must conduct a review of its Road Management Plan within 6 months of a general election. A review can however be conducted at any time and amendments made to the plan in accordance with the regulations.

The Road Management Plan Review Committee (RMPRC) was formulated for this purpose in September 2016 with a view to collaboratively review the current Road Management Plan and subsequent iterations, with all internal stakeholders represented. Meetings have been held on a quarterly basis with agendas and minutes recorded.

The wording and content of the current RMP6 (2019) were reviewed to ensure relevancy, clarity and legal requirements under the Act.

Inspection frequencies and intervention time frames were reviewed in accordance with current resources and then compared with Councils of a similar size including the City of Greater Bendigo, Warrnambool City Council and The City of Greater Geelong.

The Victorian Auditor General's Office (Local Government Insurance Risks July 2018) refers to the Road Management Plan as "the key document (Council) uses to reduce its Public Liability risk arising from its roads and footpaths—the most common cause of Public Liability claims for most councils."

Since the adoption of RMP (V5) 2017, there has been significant increase in Council's compliance with the Road Management Plan. Regular compliance meetings have identified some areas of the plan which require revision in order to further increase compliance levels. Non – compliance with the plan represents a significant risk to Council's ability to rely on statutory defences contained within the Act to public liability claims associated with the road and footpath network.

In total there are 3 major recommended changes to standards applied and 2 minor inclusions.

5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

In accordance with the requirements of Part 3 of the *Road Management (General) Regulations 2016*, a public consultation process was undertaken for a period of 28 days to seek public feedback on the content of the proposed Road Management Plan 2021 (Version 7)

Notices were placed in the Government Gazette and The Ballarat Times Newspaper on Thursday 25 February 2021 advising the general public of the review and where the proposed plan can be viewed.

6. PROCESS

Compliance

The RMP 2021 (Version 7) was examined to determine compliance with the legislative requirements under:

- *Road Management Act 2004*
- *Road Management (General) Regulations 2016*
- Code of Practice for Road Management Plans September 2004

Risk Management Principles

The standards, processes and systems contained within the RMP 2021 (Version 7) were assessed utilising a risk based approach in accordance with AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines and Council’s Risk Management Framework and policy.

Accessibility

The RMP is a publicly accessible document that needs to be easily understood by internal stakeholders and the wider community alike. Stakeholders/ Community may be unfamiliar with relevant legislation and/or risk management practices. Examination was conducted on clarity of text, tables and other information contained within the RMP(7) to determine its suitability.

Comparison

An important aspect of the review process is to ensure that Council’s existing inspection and maintenance standards are reasonable and achievable. Council sets these standards based on available resources, both human and financial. A comparison of standards was made against similar sized Council’s including:

- City of Greater Bendigo, Road Management Plan 2017 (Version 3)
- City of Greater Geelong, Road Management Plan 2018 (Version 7)
- Warrnambool City Council, Road Management Plan 2017 (Version 5)

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	RMPRC COMMENT	IMPACT ON RMP
1.A change in inspection frequencies for P3- Medium use footpaths from once per year to one every 18 months.	To provide greater coverage for inspections of low use footpaths. There has been a significant increase in the number of low use footpaths with estate development over the past few years. The decreased inspection frequency for medium use footpaths is not aligned to comparable Councils such as Bendigo, Geelong and Warrnambool who all have a 12 month inspection regime. It is however considered that the increased coverage for low use footpaths as a result of this resource reallocation, does not increase the risk of trips and falls within the municipality and the 18 month frequency is appropriate given current inspection resources.	Major- Standard variation

2. A change in the rectification response times for unsealed primary and secondary access roads from 10 working days and 1 month respectively, to 2 months.	Differing treatments are required for pothole treatment on sealed and unsealed roads. From a resourcing perspective, rather than have staff attend an unsealed road to provide what essentially amounts to a temporary treatment on a particular defect, the recommendation is to extend the rectification response time so that grading of the road can occur and provide a more longer lasting defect treatment. As vehicles are usually driven at a slower speed on unsealed roads, the recommended response time is aligned with appropriate risk management practices.	Major – Standard variation
3. The inclusion of the defect “Vegetation intruding within an envelope over the road shoulder to the traffic lane with 3.5m height clearance”.	This defect accompanies the current defect of a 4.5 m height clearance for vegetation over the traffic lane and provides greater clarity to staff and contractors as well as greater protection to the tree asset.	Major – Standard inclusion
4. The inclusion of a diagram of typical vegetation clearance over roads and footpaths.	Provides greater clarity for the reader, staff and contractors.	Minor - administrative
5. The inclusion of the defect type codes from Confirm along side the description of the defect.	Provides greater clarity for the reader, asset inspectors and contractors.	Minor - administrative

8. CONCLUSIONS

The above recommendations will result in continued improvement to Council’s compliance with its obligations under the *Road Management Act 2004* and allow for greater clarity for stakeholders.