

### 4.3 2021 ROAD MANAGEMENT PLAN

Responsible Director: Ossie Martinz

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

*That Council:*

1. *Approves the draft 2021 Road Management Plan (RMP) as presented in accordance with the Road Management Act 2004 and Road Management (General) Regulations 2016;*
2. *Note that a notice of the decision will be published in the Victoria Gazette. The regulations allow for anyone aggrieved by the decision to lodge an objection within 28 days;*
3. *Note that the amended RMP shall take effect from 31 July 2021 subject to the resolution of any objections. Officers will report back if objections are received;*
4. *Note that the amended RMP applies to all roads and classes of road in Council's Register of Public Roads;*
5. *Note that the amended RMP, register of public roads and this report will be available for public inspection during normal business hours at the following locations:*
  - *Civic Centre, 293 Springvale Road, Glen Waverley;*
  - *Oakleigh Service Centre, 3 Atherton Road, Oakleigh; and*
  - *At any time on Council's website:- [www.monash.vic.gov.au](http://www.monash.vic.gov.au)*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Council has conducted a review of its RMP in accordance with the Road Management (General) Regulations 2016 which requires Councils to conduct a review following a general election.

An extensive review was conducted by staff and an independent consultant of our all road related service standards, our performance in meeting these standards and our relative standards and performance to similar councils. A benchmark review conducted by our insurers was referenced in detail. The draft RMP was made available for community consultation and one written response was received.

A large number of changes were implemented in the previous version of the RMP (2017 with further amendments in 2018) however only a small number of changes are proposed for this 2021 edition. They are discussed below.

This report outlines the process and the findings and discusses the results of the peer and community consultation. The report recommends the adoption of the 2021 Road Management Plan.

## **BACKGROUND**

Monash City Council is the responsible road authority for the management of over 736 kilometres of local roads and 1,600 kilometres of footpaths and shared paths within the municipality. The roads, paths and related infrastructure in the roads represent the largest asset group managed by Council by quantity and by value.

Council's powers and obligations as a road authority are set down in the Road Management Act 2004 and associated regulations. A number of Codes of Practice also guide Council's role as a road authority especially the Code of Practice for Operational Responsibility for Public Roads which outlines the division of responsibilities between council and Department of Transport (VicRoads). In accordance with the Road Management (General) Regulations 2016, Council, as a road authority, must conduct a review of its RMP during the same period as it is preparing its Council Plan following a general election. This was completed earlier this year and an amended RMP was made available for community input through Have Your Say.

The RMP has a number of functions:

- Defines, in a Public Road Register, the roads Council considers are required for public use in an integrated network and will be maintained to the defined standards;
- Establishes a management system for the road management functions assigned to City of Monash as the Road Authority for local roads;
- Bases the system on policy and operational objectives within the resources available, and;
- Sets relevant standards for carrying out inspection, repair and maintenance functions for the road infrastructure.

## **DISCUSSION**

### Responsibilities

Maintenance, construction and management of Council's roads, footpaths and road related infrastructure such as bridges and drainage is the responsibility of a number of departments including:

- Facility and Infrastructure Maintenance.
- Capital Works.
- Engineering.
- Horticultural Services
- Strategic Asset Management.

The Community Amenity department administers the local laws that implement some of the powers of a road authority in particular vegetation clearance, obstructing roadways and damaging infrastructure. The Risk Management and Insurance Team manage any claims arising from defects in accordance with the Road Management Act regulations.

### The RMP Review Process

The review process was conducted in a number of phases:

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- Detailed analysis of actual performance to the RMP service standards since the last review.
- Review of the performance to standards and related internal processes by an internal reference group representing internal stakeholders. This included a review of any insurance claims made.
- An independent review of all internal data which included a peer review of similar councils and review of the standards report provided by MAV Insurance.
- Community consultation of a draft plan through Have Your Say to ensure all community issues are addressed.
- Finalisation of the proposed RMP for Council approval.
- Publication of the adopted RMP and, if changes to standards are made, invite public submissions.
- Review submissions and finalise the RMP.

#### Customer Satisfaction Data

An extended range of questions relating to the performance of roads and footpaths were first included in the 2017 Customer Satisfaction Survey and provides an ongoing source of detailed information and direct comments.

In terms of customer satisfaction since 2017 to present, with maintenance of our sealed roads, Monash rates as one of the highest in the state. In terms of footpaths, we still rate highly in the state but are average with respect to similar councils. Our footpaths are impacted greatly with the number of street trees in nature strips.

#### Customer Requests and Proactive Inspections

Council has implemented a robust proactive inspection regime that is set out in the RMP. More than 80% of jobs raised for repair and maintenance come from the proactive inspection with the rest originating from other teams and customer requests.

During the extended COVID 19 lockdown, the number of customer requests related to footpaths went up markedly as people were restricted to exercising within their local area. For the second quarter of 2020, there were twice the number of defects identified than the same period in 2019. Customer requests have returned to normal levels.

#### Actual Performance to Inspection and Repair Standards

A major functional change in systems and processes was introduced at the adoption of the last RMP amendment in late 2018 and as a result performance data was only measured from then until October 2020.

Actual performance to target was below requirements during COVID lockdown. Minor non-conformances in achieving required timelines were observed which are now being rectified. A range of measures have been implemented to ensure performance to existing standards.

### Benchmarking & Peer Review

A detailed benchmarking and peer review was independently conducted by CT Management. They compared our inspection and intervention standards to similar councils and also reviewed the MAV Insurance comparison report which analysed some specific standards. CT Management found that our standards for intervention are generally the same or higher than other councils, but our allowed time to repair is generally more demanding.

The working group felt that to maintain high customer satisfaction levels we should maintain our high standards and ensure our systems and processes are as efficient as possible.

Areas for improvement identified included general improvement in our communication with an increase in the number of languages used, and advice to updates relating to recent changes in legislation. All these changes have been implemented. Also noted was some of the process issues discussed above which have led to some performance issues. Note that MAV Insurance advisors had previously considered that some of our response time standards were placing high demands on Council resources, however these response times have been maintained as all customer reported defects require a response to the customer within 5 days which is in keeping with council's customer guarantee.

During the later stages of this review, the report from the Victorian Auditor-Generals Office (VAGO) "Maintaining Local Roads" was made available. This report contains a number of recommendations relating to RMP compliance. They accord with some of the findings made internally and by CT Management and consequently these recommendations are currently being implemented

### Community Satisfaction Surveys & Direct Feedback

Additional questions relating to road management were first included in the 2017 Community Satisfaction survey in addition to the standard questions regarding the satisfaction with local roads and pathways. The responses and the verbatim comments provided are invaluable in defining the focus for changes in the amended plan.

The 2020 Community Satisfaction Survey show levels of satisfaction for roads at 7.22 which is significantly higher than the metropolitan average of 6.93. This would tend to indicate that our existing standards, budget for inspection and maintenance and long-term renewal for roads is sufficient and sustainable and should be maintained.

The general satisfaction level in the 2020 Community Satisfaction Survey with footpath maintenance and repair is rated as good but footpaths are more of an issue to residents in the older suburbs. Significant changes in inspection frequency and standards were implemented in 2018. Renewal programs have also increased since 2017 which is reflected in the Long Term

Financial Plan. These actions have already seen some positive improvements and therefore no further changes are proposed.

### **Proposed Changes**

#### **General**

The current RMP underwent a major revision in 2017 and the majority of changes are administrative or to improve readability.

One change in standards is proposed.

There have been a number of changes which relate to the implementation of improved systems which are discussed below.

#### **Response Time – Road Deformation Defects**

Only one response time was deemed to be not appropriate and a change is proposed due to delays with getting approvals from bus operators. This change is to repair medium to large road deformation defects and it is proposed to be changed from 10 days to 30 days. Typically these are severe rutting or mounding at intersections or roundabouts providing a rough surface. Analysis indicated that all recent cases of these defects have occurred on bus routes and there needs to be additional time allowed to consult with bus operators before undertaking works and potentially interrupting their service schedules. Interim safety measures would be employed during the extra repair time including signage or speed restrictions.

#### **Street Trees and Road Clearance**

Street trees are a major resource for the community and the issue of vehicles striking trees and low hanging aerial infrastructure (for example NBN cables), has been a concern for a number of years.

A revised process and standard has been developed in conjunction with Horticultural Services which clarifies Council's position and process with respect to the protection of street trees while meeting our obligations to public road users. The new section is fully harmonised with the Tree Management Policy.

#### **Public Road Register update**

A complete review and update of the Register of Public Roads was also undertaken during the RMP review. There are 2,674 entries in the register which now includes private roads that are named to provide clarity of responsibility. Additional registers for Pathways (footpaths and shared paths) and off street car parks are also being implemented. The Public Road Register is currently being integrated into our asset management information system and mapping tools.

#### **Public Information - Performance Data**

A number of community members raised the issue of transparency of Council's performance in meeting the standards established in the RMP. The publication of performance data is also a recommendation of the VAGO report. The working group recommends that annual performance statistics be made publicly available as soon as possible.

### **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed RMP is consistent with Council's social outcomes in particular the standards for roads and pathways that meet the community's walking, cycling and transport needs and also promotes a level of resilience and safety for members of the community with mobility issues.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS**

The proposed changes to the RMP does not have any human rights implications.

### **GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The Road Management Plan was broadly reviewed as to whether it needed a Gender Impact Assessment. The review indicated that *'as the Road Management Plan is basically a technical document which "sets out the circumstances, the manner and the standards to which the road authority will perform its inspection, maintenance and repair responsibilities", there is no evidence that the circumstances, the manner and the standards of inspecting, maintaining and repairing roads outlined in the RMP has any significant impact on gender equality.*

*Putting greater emphasis on repairing roads than footpaths is an aspect of gender inequality which has been identified at other Councils. However, in reviewing the Plan Monash the repair times are the same for footpaths and roads which shows that there is no gender inequality in this instance."*

It has been noted that a full GIA will be scheduled before community consultation during the next review period.

### **CONSULTATION**

A community engagement plan was implemented as discussed above. An internal working team reviewed each part of the RMP and approved the changes made.

MAV Insurance provided some benchmark data and other councils were consulted by CT Management.

One written submission was received during the Have Your Say community consultation period:

Submitter	Suburb	Submission	Response
Mr C. Carter	Oakleigh South	1. Detailed submission on risk management, tree clearance process	1. The proposed tree clearance process is best-practice developed from a

		<p>for various categories of road, and financial priorities.</p> <p>2. Request for Council to be transparent with risk assessments. Request to Council to make public our inspection procedures.</p> <p>3. General concern that we are not addressing public safety.</p> <p>4. Some suggested changes to grammar and clarity of language.</p>	<p>model in NSW. It balances the needs of road users with tree management. Mr Carter's submission has assisted Council to develop the risk management process.</p> <p>2. It is intended to invite Mr Carter to participate in a risk assessment and inspection on a street of his choosing to provide a practical demonstration of the new process.</p> <p>3. Mr Carter has a perception of Council's roles and responsibilities under road safety rules and general public safety which officers will address with him directly.</p> <p>4. The suggested readability and other changes to the document have all been included in this draft.</p>
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If the proposed RMP is approved by Council, then the decision will be gazetted and any aggrieved party may make a formal objection within 28 days of gazettal. Any submissions received will be brought back to Council for consideration and amendment of the RMP as deemed necessary by Council.

### ***FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS***

The current capital works and operational budgets and forward budget projections are sufficient to maintain the standards established in the RMP.

The current Long Term Financial Plan contains forecasts for the capital investment required to maintain roads, footpaths and road related assets to the required standards.

### ***CONCLUSION***

The proposed RMP works within the current budget and resource constraints to deliver inspection and maintenance services which are on par or better than similar councils and reflect resident concerns.

It is recommended that the amended 2021 Road Management Plan is accepted with an implementation date of 31 July 2021.

Attachment 1 – Draft 2021 Road Management Plan.

Attachment 2 – Extract from Monash Register of Public Roads