

8 REVIEW OF THE ROAD MANAGEMENT PLAN

FILE REFERENCE INT1738507

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RECOMMENDATION

That this report be:

1. Received and acknowledged as meeting Council's requirements of Regulation 302, (5)(a) of the Road Management (General) Regulations 2005 and be made available to the public.
2. Included as an appendix to the existing Road Management Plan.

That Council endorses the process for developing and adopting a new Road Management Plan as detailed in this report's conclusion.

Attachments

Nil.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With a newly elected Council, the Road Management Act requires that Council must conduct a review of its Road Management Plan (RMP).

With the assistance of the MAV and Council insurers, a full internal review of the RMP has been undertaken. This review has focused predominantly on the schedule of maintenance standards as well as the management systems.

Based on the review undertaken there are a number of proposed alterations with some fundamental changes to the way some assets are inspected and managed. This outcome will necessitate Council's Road Management Plan (adopted 17 August 2009) to be revoked with a new Road Management Plan (2017) adopted by Council.

It is recommended that Council acknowledge this review report and endorse the development of the associated new RMP which will be considered for adoption at a later date.

BACKGROUND

Council's RMP (adopted 17 August 2009) has been prepared to document the principles, methods and systems used by the Council in managing the local road system. The Plan applies to road related infrastructure such as roads, footpaths, bridges and drains.

The Plan has two major components:

1. Schedule of Maintenance Standards – A statement of the levels of service that the Council provides in managing the local road network; and
2. Road Management System – A work flow process that provides a sound basis for traceability of inspections, work planning, scheduling and monitoring.

A road authority is required by the Road Management Act 2004 and Road Management Act (General) Regulations 2005 to conduct a review of its RMP before 30 June 2017.

The purpose of this review is to ensure that the standards in relation to, and the priorities to be given to; the inspection, maintenance and repair of the roads and classes of road to which the plan applies, are appropriate. This report details the findings of the review and any suggested changes are to be presented to Council prior to making it available to the public.

In preparation of the RMP review the MAV, including its insurance arm and counsel, provided a number of information sessions and workshops across the state to assist councils. This information has been invaluable as it has provided base data about the industry standards which has not been available when reviewing previous RMP's.

REVIEW OF CURRENT PLAN

ROADS

Review:

A review of the current intervention levels, priorities and defect rectification timeframes for road assets pose some risk to Council, such as the measuring of defects in the field as part of the inspection process. The current RMP specifies measurements against each defect type that defines the response priority. The review identified are that the intervention level descriptors will not be defensible in the courts as the measurements taken in the field are estimates and rely on the inspector's experience in judging the measurements from the vehicle. Advice provided has indicated that measurements should be deleted from the RMP, unless council staff actually measure each defect. The expectation to take detailed measurements of every defect in the field is impractical.

Programming of works and notifying our customers of planned works has been identified as an area that requires improvement. The current process to program works is based on the timeframes set out in Council's Road Management Plan (RMP).

Road signs and guide posts are mentioned in the current RMP, but are not consistently inspected by council's Surveillance Officers which is proposed to be updated. Timeframes to rectify defects are sufficient and can be achieved with the current resources.

Advice provided by the MAV Insurers and counsel has indicated that the descriptors for Priority 1 defects across the suite of asset groups need to be removed as they believe that the definitions are subjective and open to interpretation and therefore not defensible in the courts.

Standards for line marking are not mentioned within the current RMP. Due to its importance in terms of road safety and function it is proposed to add appropriate standards for inspection and rectification relating to this element.

The proposed way forward

Operations management undertook a review of the Grading Maintenance service which centred on improving productivity, reducing costs and better in forming our customers internally and externally of

planned works. This review focused on human and plant resources, inspection and maintenance processes and meeting the obligations under Councils current Road Management Plan (RMP), which

included quantity and quality control. A large emphasis was placed on the ability to deliver these services with the capacity to meet the required standards with the current resource levels. The outcome of this review is to alter the unsealed roads maintenance program to a cyclic proactive program, rather than a reactive intervention level driven program.

Therefore, a set cyclic maintenance program would be developed for the proactive maintenance of the road network. Interval periods would be set based on historical maintenance completed previously on the network. The maintenance crew would work to this program and rectify all defects identified. The cyclic program and details of the completed works would be programmed and recorded in Council's Maintenance Management System, Reflect. This system also records date and time of works being completed with GPS coordinates.

It is expected that Council officers would be able to provide our customers, internal and external, more visibility of the program, potentially on Council's website, reducing the angst currently received by many of our customers not knowing exactly when works will be completed.

With the proactive approach, it is also believed that the new methodology would allow for improved ability to spend more time inspecting and capture defects associated with assets which are currently inconsistently captured.

Given the breadth of proposed changes, the establishment and wording associated will need to be carefully considered, developed and reviewed by Council's insurers.

This proposed process is currently used by Yarra Ranges Council and has also been endorsed by the MAV.

In addition, it is also proposed to develop an annual night inspection program of the road and road related assets which is imperative to understand how the assets perform under these environments (e.g. retro reflectivity of signage, line marking and guideposts).

FOOTPATHS

Review:

With the benefit of the industry based data it could be seen that Council's current proactive inspection timeframes for concrete and asphalt footpaths are too long and, compared with the practices of other Councils, are unlikely to be considered reasonable in a court of law.

It was identified that:

- In general, the intervention levels for defects was too broad ranging and needs to be revised to be clearer and consistent across the 3 levels of footpath classification, and
- the response times for defects rectification works needs to be reduced.

On the contrary, Council's current standard of 20mm for a trip hazard intervention would be considered to be lower than the level set as reasonable by legal precedents - 25mm. Based on this, it is considered acceptable for Council to amend this standard to match.

The proactive inspections for gravel paths are currently undertaken on an annual basis. Given the dynamic nature of gravel paths, and how susceptible they can be to weather conditions, it would be considered prudent to reduce the length of time between these inspections.

Proposals

It is proposed that the proactive inspections for concrete and asphalt footpaths be amended to be carried out twice a year for high priority footpaths, annually for medium priority footpaths and once every two years for low priority footpaths.

The intervention levels for each hazard type are to be revised so that the same level applies across all footpath priorities. as well as in line with legal definitions of paths and that the response time are reduced.

It is proposed that the timeframe for proactive inspections for gravel paths be increased to bi-annually to align with the unsealed road inspections and consistent industry standards.

BRIDGES

Review:

The review of Council's processes to inspect and maintain its vehicular/pedestrian bridges and major culverts network was undertaken. The current RMP timeframes for the proactive inspection of these structures appear to be adequate in terms of the structure types and the potential risks they present. Timber boardwalks are currently referred to in the plan under footpaths. Given the potential structural risks inherent with timber boardwalks, it is suggested this asset type be reclassified under the heading of bridges.

The maintenance component of the RMP has identified concerns regarding defect rectification timeframes and descriptors which has been drawn directly from the VicRoads Bridge Service Standards with a majority of these standards not considered being relevant to the defects that may impact the road or pedestrians using these structures.

Proposals

Continue with the current Level 1, 2 & 3 inspection frequencies with the inclusion of viewing platforms. Transfer timber boardwalks from footpaths to bridges section to enable the inspection and maintenance of this asset to be undertaken by accredited bridge inspectors and maintenance staff.

Remove reference to service level activities, intervention levels, performance standards and response times from the current RMP, however reword to read:

- Intervention Level: Repairs identified defects as part of the approved Bridge and Major Culvert scheduled inspection program.
- Performance Standard: The bridge, major culvert or structure should be maintained to ensure that:
 - It is safe for use by vehicular traffic, including bicycles, and pedestrian traffic where applicable;
 - It is maintained generally in accordance with approved standards and works programs;
 - Inspections to be completed by a suitably qualified and experienced person.
 - Response Time: As per approved Bridge and Major Culvert works program.

DRAINAGE

Review:

The current RMP makes provision only for proactive inspections on a subset of drainage assets (surface drains) that have been identified by maintenance supervisors as having an increased risk of failure as shown by past records of flooding issues. These inspections are carried out at the same time as the proactive road inspections. Unfortunately, these inspections are performed sporadically. Gross Pollutant Traps (GPT's) and Sediment Pits are inspected and cleaned as required on a 3-monthly basis using an external contractor with specialised pit cleaning equipment. Underground drainage pipes and pits are currently reactively inspected with the exception of some known trouble spots.

Timeframes for responding to flooding property as a result of blocked open or underground drain including pits can be troublesome, particularly during rainfall events. The RMP indicates a 4-hour response time that can be a challenge to meet given the number of assets under council's management.

Proposals:

It is expected that the suggested changes within the road section of the RMP will allow the surveillance officers to have capacity to undertake a more detailed inspection of the surface drainage assets as well as other Council managed infrastructure within the road reserve while inspecting the road pavement. Sections of drains that are at risk of causing flooding to property would be identified and potentially inspected on a more frequent basis or after a significant storm event. These programs would be managed using Council's Maintenance Management System, Reflect

It is proposed to amend response times for flooding to private property from 4-hours to 1 day to allow sufficient time to respond and implement remedies.

Response times for damaged pits is 1 day which allows for temporary works to be undertaken like erecting barricading around the site if required. More permanent repairs can be completed within 4 weeks (e.g. concreting works etc.)

It is also proposed to proactively inspect and clean a nominated number of pits per year. Currently, 5000 pits are inspected and cleaned as required per year on a 5-year cycle. Council's Drainage Asset Management Plan is currently being reviewed and will provide additional direction on the management of council's drainage network that is relevant to this review.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This process will necessitate Council's Road Management Plan (adopted 17 August 2009) to be revoked with a new Road Management Plan (2017) adopted by Council.

RELEVANCE TO COUNCIL PLAN

The Review of the Road Management Plan relates to the following objectives and outcomes of the Council plan.

3 "Our Environment",

3.1 "Provision and maintenance of assets on a life-cycle basis",

3.1.1 "Maintain all Council roads and supporting infrastructure in accordance with the Roads Management Act 2004"
and

3.1.4 "Manage Council's assets like roads, drainage, footpaths and buildings, etc. in a way that ensures they are adequately maintained over their life"

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

A notice will need to be placed in the Victorian Government Gazette, and public notices will be placed in 'The Age', Pakenham Gazette and Rangers Trader Mail advising of the review and the availability of the report.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Based on the proposed outcomes, the following implications have been identified:

Roads - the proposed change in maintenance practices for roads will result in no extra resources required as the maintenance performed will simply be consistent with historical maintenance schedules. Through efficiency, capacity in the existing surveillance officers may be created that will

enable inspections of more asset groups as required to be performed that are not performed well at present.

Footpaths - whilst there is an increase in the frequency of proactive inspections, a review of how this data is captured will be required to ensure efficiency. It is expected that there will be increased capacity in other surveillance areas to assist this function due to the reduced proactive inspections schedules in the roads area, however this will need to be further clarified.

The increase in the trip hazard height will decrease the number of defects requiring repairs across the shire, however the decrease in response times for these repairs is likely to result in an increase in the annual costs in the short-term.

Drainage - At this stage, it is estimated that it will cost approximately \$30,000 to perform the proactive pit inspections with costs to be confirmed through a formal quote process, however further details will be available once the revised Drainage Asset Management Plan is completed.

Bridges - There is no extra resources required to undertake the bridge RMP commitments as the proposed changes simply reinforce the status quo.

CONCLUSION

The review of the Road Management plan has predominantly focused on the Schedule of Maintenance Standards and Road Management System associated with the four areas covered in the RMP.

A number of alterations have been proposed to improve efficiency and services with regards to the way council manages roads, footpaths, drains and bridges. In order to implement the findings associated with this review, it is identified at a later date that Council's Road Management Plan (adopted 17 August 2009) will be revoked in accordance with section 41A of the Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984; and make a new RMP under section 54 of the Road Management Act.

This will involve the following process.

1. A new version of the RMP to be drafted based on outcomes of the review and presented to Council
2. On acceptance by Council a Public Notice to be published to announce the intention to revoke the current Road Management Plan and adopt the new Road Management Plan.
3. A period for receiving submissions from the Public will occur in accordance with the Road Management Act and a report will be drafted, including summarisation of any submissions, recommending a final version of the new RMP to be adopted.
4. Council to formally revoke existing RMP and adopt the new version, with Public Notices published in accordance with the requirements of the Road Management Act.