
REPORT NO:	0.0
REPORT TITLE:	Review of the Road Management Plan
SOURCE:	Geoff Bird, Coordinator Technical Services
DIVISION:	Infrastructure & Assets
FILE NO:	-
POLICY:	-
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:	3.2: Deliver responsible and transparent governance, services and sustainable assets that respond to community needs
ATTACHMENTS:	1. <i>Draft Road Management Plan Version 8</i> 2. <i>Road Management Plan Version 7</i>

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No Council officers involved in the preparation of this Report have a general or material interest in relation to the matters for consideration.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT:

- 1.1 The Road Management Act (General) Regulations 2016 requires Council to review its Road Management Plan (RMP) following municipal elections. The current review needs to be undertaken by 30 June 2025. Having reviewed the RMP, Council may decide to amend it.
- 1.2 This report constitutes a review of the RMP and recommends that Council seek to amend the RMP to better reflect industry standards, simplify its processes, and improve its readability.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- 2.1 note that the Road Management Plan V7, 2021 has been reviewed in accordance with regulation 9 of the Road Management (General) Regulations 2016 (the Regulations).
- 2.2 note that Hume’s Road Management Plan V8 aligns with the Municipal Association Victoria’s (MAV) recommended format.
- 2.3 having reviewed its Road Management Plan supports in principle the findings of the review.
- 2.4 give notice in the Government Gazette in accordance with section 54 of the Road Management Act 2004 that it proposes to amend its plan in accordance with the draft shown in Attachment 1.
- 2.5 having publicly exhibited the proposed amended Plan for at least 28 days, consider all submissions received and consider whether to adopt the reviewed Road Management Plan V8, with or without further amendment.

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3. LEGISLATIVE POWERS & POLICY CONTEXT:

- 3.1 Local Government (LG) Act 1989/2020
- 3.2 Road Management Act 2004
- 3.3 Road Management (General) Regulations 2016

4. OVERARCHING GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES:

This Report supports Council is giving effect to the following Overarching Governance Principles:

- a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law;
- b) priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;
- c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;
- d) innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued;
- e) collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought;
- f) the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;
- g) regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making;
- h) the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

5.1 CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACT 2006

The above rights are not being limited by the recommended action in this Report.

5.2 GENDER EQUALITY ACT 2020

The recommendations in this report and the operation of the updated Road Management Plan is not expected to result in gendered impacts. Therefore, a Gender Impact Assessment was not deemed necessary.

6. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The cost of undertaking the review of the Road Management Plan is funded from the operational budget.
- 6.2 Any changes to the standards outlined in the Road Management Plan may have an impact on future budgets.

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- 6.3 Guidance from the MAV has identified the need for changes to some of the inspection frequencies and intervention levels in the Plan. Adjustments have been made to comply with these recommendations, while remaining within existing resource levels. For example, the inspection frequency for low use footpaths has been increased and to accommodate this without the need for additional inspectors, the frequency for access road inspections has been reduced.

7. OPPORTUNITIES & RISKS:

- 7.1 This report and the updated Road Management Plan V8 (RMP) aims to enable Council to support its responsibilities under the Road Management Act 2004.
- 7.2 The RMP seeks to manage risks related to the operation and use of Council’s road and footpath network.
- 7.3 The RMP provides guidance to the community on how Council will undertake its duties in relation to management of roads and footpaths. This includes defining the standards they can expect and the response times for addressing any issues that are identified.
- 7.4 This review of the RMP is in line with a new format developed by the MAV, which all councils have been encouraged to adopt. This will assist the community and any other agencies that operate across multiple council areas, by ensuring consistency of format and ease of comparing standards across different councils.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- 8.1 To amend its Road Management Plan, Council must give notice in accordance with Regulation (10). This will provide notification to the community that the Plan has been amended and how to access it. The community may make written submissions regarding this report and/or the draft Road Management Plan V8. Council will be required to consider these submissions before adopting the new Road Management Plan V8.

9. DISCUSSION:

9.1 Background

- 9.1.1 Council adopted its first Road Management Plan (RMP) in 2004, and it was last amended in 2021 (RMP V7). The RMP sets out which roads and road related infrastructure Council maintains; outlines Council’s road management functions and sets standards for inspecting and maintaining those assets. This is predominantly to assist in defending insurance claims for personal injury, damages or loss to property associated with incidents on Council roads and footpaths.
- 9.1.2 A companion document to the RMP is Council’s *Register of Public Roads*, which lists the roads and paths which Council is responsible. Council regularly updates the Register to include roads contributed through the development and subdivision process that are handed over to Council.
- 9.1.3 The Register does not contain roads maintained by other road authorities (eg. Department of Transport) or roads that Council does not maintain (eg. Private roads). Both the RMP and the Register are available on Council’s website or can be viewed at Council’s Customer Service Centres.

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- 9.1.4 Council’s first RMP was in response to the Victorian Government enacting the *Road Management Act 2004* (the Act). Prior to 2004, road authorities, including councils, were facing escalating costs associated with civil claims for damages from footpath and road users. Since the introduction of the Act, a road authority is protected from claims related to the roads and paths that it manages, provided that it can demonstrate that it has complied with the Act and its RMP.
- 9.1.5 The Act requires Council to review the appropriateness of its RMP at prescribed intervals including after each municipal election. In line with section 8 (3) of the *Road Management (General) Regulations 2016*, Council must review its RMP prior to 30 June 2025.
- 9.1.6 The Act also allows Council to amend its RMP in accordance with the *Road Management (General) Regulations 2016* (the Regulations), giving Council the opportunity to update its RMP to reflect changing community expectations and available resources.
- 9.1.7 Council has an Asset Management System (AMS) which geographically records each inspection and any defects that are identified. Using the AMS has enabled an improved understanding of the resources required to effectively inspect the approximately 1,518 kilometres of roads and 2,157 kilometres of footpaths and the standard of repair that can be achieved within a given budget.

9.2 Process for Review

- 9.2.1 The Act requires that Council conduct its review in accordance with the Regulations and associated Codes of Practice. In conducting the review, Council must consider whether the standards, priorities, inspection, maintenance, and repair of its roads set out in the RMP are appropriate (regulation 9(1)). Council must ensure that its RMP is “not so unreasonable” that no other similar road authority, acting reasonably, would arrive at such a plan Clause 39(5).
- 9.2.2 Having reviewed its RMP V7 (refer to Attachment 2), Council must then produce a written report summarising findings and conclusions and make the report available for copying or inspection.
- 9.2.3 As part of the current review, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) being the insurer of most Victorian Local Governments is attempting to standardise Council Road Management Plans across all municipalities. In doing so, they provided guidance via a legally reviewed RMP template.
- 9.2.4 Based on the MAV’s advice, the updated RMP includes a 3-level hierarchy for roads and paths, rather than the previous 2-level. The MAV also provided advice on acceptable ranges for intervention levels and inspection frequencies. The standards in Council’s Plan have been reviewed to align with these recommendations.
- 9.2.5 The review has also been guided by the improved data that has been enabled by the AMS, with the condition of the road and footpath network now better understood and able to be analysed. This has enabled a more accurate assessment of inspection frequencies and intervention levels that can be achieved with available resources.
- 9.2.6 In response to the review, it is recommended that Council commence the process to amend the RMP.

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9.3 Review Findings

9.3.1 Footpath Inspection Frequency

- (a) RMP V7 classified the hierarchy for footpaths as either High Use or Low Use. High Use paths are those in and around shopping precincts, activity centres, sporting precincts, public transport nodes etc. They also include paths adjacent to schools, community facilities and other known attractions where pedestrian activity is likely to be high. All others were classified as ‘Low’ use.
- (b) The review for RMP V8 has amended the classification, and the type of footpaths identified in each category. The recommendation is to have ‘High’, ‘Medium’ and ‘Low’ which includes Shared Bicycle Paths.
- (c) ‘High’ classification footpaths now refer to approximately 4km of paths found in the CBDs of Sunbury Broadmeadows and Craigieburn. These will now be inspected 3 monthly.
- (d) ‘Medium’ footpaths are the rest of those which are currently referred to as ‘High’ in RMP V7. ‘Low’ classification footpaths remain unchanged.
- (e) Council currently has a 1-year cycle for the inspection of High Use footpaths and a 3-year cycle for ‘Low’ use paths. Following comparison with like councils and the MAV recommended minimum inspection frequency of 24 months for ‘Low’ use footpaths, Council’s current frequency of 36 months in RMP V7 is considered unreasonable. It is recommended that the inspection frequency be amended to 24 months to be within the MAV recommended range.
- (f) If Hume decided to retain a 36-month inspection cycle for Low use footpaths there could be implications in defending insurance claims due to the frequency being greater than the MAV recommended range.
- (g) The review recommends the inspection frequency for ‘High’ use paths currently 12 monthly be increased to 3 monthly. This will significantly reduce time between inspections and minimise risk to pedestrians on the highest use paths, noting that the length of paths classified as ‘High’ has been significantly reduced with the introduction of ‘Medium’.

9.3.2 Roads Inspection Frequency

- (a) RMP V7 classified Council roads as either ‘Collector and Major Local Roads’ or ‘Local Access Roads’.
- (b) The Draft RMP V8 classifies Council roads as ‘Sub Arterial’, ‘Collector’ or ‘Access’.
- (c) For Sub Arterial roads the MAV recommends that Council increases the current inspection frequency from 6-monthly to 3-monthly. This will reduce time to address defects on Councils highest trafficked roads.
- (d) In the case of Collector roads, the review found other like Councils roads consistent with this classification have inspections ranged from 12 weekly to annual. An inspection frequency of six months was the most common. Hume’s RMP V7 specified inspecting these roads and associated assets on a six-monthly basis and this appears reasonable.

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- (e) In the case of ‘Access’ roads, RMP V7 has a 12-month frequency for inspections. The review in line with the MAV recommendations proposes extending this to 24 months, which is within the MAV recommended guidelines. By making ‘Access’ roads 24 monthly, resources will be able to be reallocated to increase the inspection frequency of “Low” footpaths bringing them within the MAV guidelines.
- (f) In the case of unsealed roads, RMP V7 had a six-month inspection frequency. This is consistent with other councils and given the low number of unsealed roads in Hume (17 kilometres in total) and the low traffic volume they carry; it is recommended that the six-month frequency remain unchanged.
- (g) Inspection frequencies Roads and Footpaths:

Table1

Roads	Current (RMP V7)	Proposed (RMP V8)
Sub Arterial	6 Months	3 Months
Collector	6 Months	6 Months
Access	12 Months	24 Months
Footpaths		
High	12 Months	3 Months
Medium	12 Months	12 Months
Low Local Access	36 Months	24 Months
Shared Bicycle Paths	36 Months	24 Months

9.3.3 Intervention Levels Footpaths

- (a) Intervention levels define the nature and extent of a defect to determine where Council will intervene to undertake repairs. For example, currently Council will intervene to address a step in a footpath when it is greater than 25mm.
- (b) The intervention level does not define the type of repair that will be done. For example, in the case of a step in a footpath, repair methods may include grinding the path to remove the step, placement of an asphalt or concrete wedge to bridge the step or in extreme cases, removal and replacement of footpath bays. However, in most cases it would not be possible to undertake removal and replacement within the required response time. This is something that may happen later when warranted, provided that the path has been brought back within intervention level by another method such as ramping.
- (c) The review of intervention levels across other councils found Hume’s current level for steps and cracks greater than 25mm to be relatively ambitious. Other Councils ranged from 20mm to 50mm and varied significantly between classifications in some cases.

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- (d) Analysis of data from Council’s AMS also found that the 25mm standard for steps and cracks made it difficult to guarantee compliance.
- (e) The review found 30mm for steps and cracks would be achievable and was appropriate when compared to other councils and is within the MAV accepted range. It is recommended that this standard apply to all ‘High’, ‘Medium’ and ‘Low’ classifications of footpaths.
- (f) It is important to note that changing the intervention level from 25 to 30mm does not represent an intent to allow the condition of footpaths to deteriorate. Rather, it is intended to enable Council to guarantee that it can comply with intervention levels. This is required to minimise the risk liability arising through failure to comply with the RMP.

9.3.4 Intervention Levels Roads

- (a) The review does not recommend any material changes to the intervention levels for roads in the current RMP V7.

9.3.5 Response Times

- (a) Response time is the time in which an action will be undertaken. RMP V7 divides response times into the initial time to respond to a report of a possible defect and then response times to rectify a defect if found to be outside of intervention levels.
- (b) The response times in Hume’s RMP have been determined on the basis of a risk assessment, considering the type and severity of the defect and the hierarchy of the road or path.
- (c) Hume’s RMP specifies an Initial Response Time for investigating defects which currently ranges from three to five days. This is the time from receipt of a report from the public to an inspection by Council Officers to determine whether a defect exceeds an intervention level and requires work. Not all councils specify this separately from the total time allowed to repair the defect. It has been included with Hume’s RMP to provide greater clarity as to when feedback can be provided to a customer.
- (d) The Maximum Response Time is the time to bring a defect back within intervention level. This is measured from the time a defect is identified by Council at the initial inspection and determined to require further action.
- (e) Current Maximum Response Times vary from three days to 12 months. The response times for the other councils varied between five days and 12 months based on type of asset and the hierarchy of the road. The review found that Hume’s current response times are generally appropriate when compared to other councils and are achievable based on current resources. Therefore, it is recommended that the majority of response times remain unchanged.
- (f) The proposed Response Times are shown in the draft RMP V8, Attachment 4 and 5 - Inspection and Response Times.

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9.3.6 General

- (a) Utilising the MAV RMP Guidelines and Template, the review has identified several opportunities to update the RMP to better align with resources and to ensure compliance, while also being appropriate in comparison to other councils. These recommended changes are shown in the draft RMP V8 in Attachment 4 and 5.

9.4 Review Conclusions

9.4.1 A review of Council’s RMP has considered whether the standards, priorities, inspection, maintenance and repair of its roads are appropriate. The review recommends that Council amend its RMP including:

- (a) Changing the format of the document to align with the MAV template, with the aim of achieving consistency across different councils.
- (b) Changing the intervention level for vertical displacement and cracks in footpaths from 25mm to 30mm.
- (c) Changing the inspection frequencies for both Roads and Footpaths as detailed in (Table 1).
- (d) Miscellaneous minor amendments to the document to improve readability where relevant.

9.5 Process for Amending the Road Management Plan

9.5.1 To amend the standards for inspection and repair in the RMP, regulation 10(1) requires Council to give notice of the proposed amendment. The notice must state:

- (a) The purpose of the proposed amendment.
- (b) All the roads and paths, as well as the classes of roads and paths to which the amendment applies.
- (c) Where a copy of the proposed amendments and associated report (this report) may be obtained or inspected. In this case it is proposed to make a copy of the draft amended RMP and a copy of this report available on Council’s website. They would also be made available at Council’s Customer Service Centres at Broadmeadows, Sunbury and Craigieburn.
- (d) That any person aggrieved by the proposed amendment may make a submission to Council within 28 days after the notice has been published in the Government Gazette

9.5.2 Council must publish the notice in a daily newspaper generally circulating in Hume City and the Government Gazette. It may also give the notice to person it believes maybe affected by the amendment. To satisfy this requirement it is proposed to publish the notice in newspapers and on Council’s website.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The RMP V7 has been reviewed and is now a new format plan in line with the template recommended by the MAV. It also takes into consideration guidelines from the MAV for inspection frequencies, intervention levels and response times. Amendments to the RMP V7 are shown in Attachment 4 and 5 and the Draft Road Management Plan V8.

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- 10.2 It is recommended that Council commence the process to amend the Road Management Plan V7 21 to V8 25.