

4.1 MELBOURNE EASTERN REGIONAL TRAILS STRATEGY

Responsible Director: Ossie Martinz

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the overall findings detailed in the Melbourne Eastern Regional Trails Strategy and specifically the implications relevant to Monash, which include:

- a) A listing of actions detailed in the Strategy relevant to Monash that generally support existing Council strategies and direction; and*
- b) An increased opportunity to attract external funding for trail projects of regional significance in Monash.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to note the findings of the *Melbourne Eastern Regional Trails Strategy* and the key items relevant to Monash, which will strengthen any funding applications made on behalf of the Melbourne East Regional Sport and Recreation Strategy.

BACKGROUND

Melbourne East Regional Sport and Recreation Strategy (MERSRS) has been developed to support and guide councils and stakeholders in the Eastern Metropolitan Region in the planning and delivery of regional level sport and recreation facilities and shared recreation trails.

In accordance with MERSRS principles and regional planning priorities, the Eastern Metropolitan Region Councils inclusive of Monash, Knox, Maroondah, Manningham, Yarra Ranges, Boroondara and Whitehorse agreed to partner with Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV) on a project titled the *Melbourne Eastern Regional Trails Strategy* to identify future needs and opportunities for trails of regional significance.

The eastern part of the Melbourne metropolitan area is home to many trails that provide opportunities for a range of users including walkers, runners, cyclists, water sport users and horse riders. Some of these trails are of a regional scale and significance, providing opportunities for transport, exercise, recreation and sight-seeing to residents and visitors. A number of these regional trails cross municipal borders and have multiple land owners and managers, making coordination between municipalities and other authorities an important part of achieving an effective and integrated regional trail network.

This study was undertaken with the goal of providing the strategic direction required to allow local government and other land management authorities to work together towards an interconnected and well-used trail network that is accessible for all and promotes healthy and active communities.

DISCUSSION

The Eastern Regional Trails Strategy has documented a planning framework and action plan to establish a high quality network of integrated and connected shared trails across the diverse range of urban and natural environments. The Eastern Regional Trail network will provide safe and accessible transport and recreation opportunities for residents with the aim to reinforce the region 'trails destination'.

The strategy identifies two kinds of action items associated with improving the regional trail network in Eastern Melbourne relevant to Monash:

1. *Region-wide items* - these items are recommendations regarding the broader management and operation of the trail network across the eastern region; and
2. *Trail-specific items* – Individual and specific trail improvement projects that have been assessed against criteria to determine their relative prioritisation within the Eastern Metropolitan Region.

The listing of action items for Monash detailed in the Strategy is detailed below with comments and updates added in italics:

Progress Underway

- Undertake renewal works on the Scotchmans Creek Trail from Stanley Avenue to Huntingdale Road. *An upgrade of this remaining section of Scotchmans Creek Trail is under consideration for the 2019/20 Council budget. The upgrade has been deferred for a number of years after request from Melbourne Water who own the retarding basin.*
- Close gap in the Waverley Rail Trail from Beatrice Avenue (east of Jordanville Station) to Stephenson's Road (west of Mount Waverley Station). *A 3.0m concrete shared path has already been constructed between Beatrice Avenue and Huntingdale Road. The remaining section between Huntingdale Road and Alvie Road is in the planning stage and this will complete an off-road link from Holmesglen to Gen Waverley Station.*
- Improve the crossing at High Street Road, Ashwood, on the Gardiners Creek Trail to provide a safe, clear and priority crossing point. *The installation of pedestrian operated signals which has been funded under the TAC's Safe Systems Road Infrastructure Program is near completion.*
- Provide a safe, signed and signalised priority crossing on the Scotchmans Creek Trail at Forster Road. *The installation of pedestrian operated signals which has been funded under TAC's Safe Systems Road Infrastructure Program is due to commence in the next few months.*
- Construct a shared use path along the Melbourne Water pipe track reservation between Highbury Road and Syndal Station. *The installation of a gravel path*

between Highbury Road and Utah Road is expected to be completed in the next few months, subject to Melbourne Water approval. A concrete shared path already exists from Utah Road to High Street Road. The provision of a concrete path is subject to future upgrading works on the Melbourne Water water mains being completed, however this is not expected to be undertaken in the next five years.

- Undertake repairs to the surface of the Gardiners Creek Trail where required. *Repairs are currently undertaken as identified in a timely manner and it is not considered that this requires a change in practice.*

Wayfinding Signage Projects

- Improve wayfinding signage on the Scotchmans Creek Trail, Gardiners Creek Trail and Dandenong Creek Trail particularly at crossings, connections to other trails and links to surrounding destinations. *Improvements to trail signage was a significant issue highlighted in Council's Integrated Transport Strategy (2017) and is a priority for Council.*
- Improve wayfinding signage, including trail heads, on the Waverley Rail Trail particularly at connection to the Gardiners Creek Trail, crossings, and connections to other trails and links to surrounding destinations.

Future Opportunities for Trail Development

- Widen the Gardiners Creek Trail where possible from Highbury Road to Warrigal Road. *Council's current standard is to widen existing trails to 3.0m wide. Gardiners Creek Trail is typically 2.0-2.4m wide and will require upgrading to this width.*
- Upgrade the Scotchmans Creek Trail on both sides of Scotchmans Creek from Monash Freeway to the Monash Aquatic Recreation Centre (MARC). *Work has been undertaken over the past few years to upgrade the shared use path to a 3.0m concrete path between Monash Freeway and Waverley Road. Generally the section from Waverley Road to MARC is concrete and is in good condition. Paths on the opposite side of the creek to the shared use path are proposed to remain informal to encourage pedestrian and dog walking in these areas rather than cycling.*
- Complete the gap in the Waverley Rail Trail from Coleman Parade to Kingsway (Glen Waverley Station). *This project would be subject to negotiation with VicTrack and Metro Rail, but has been identified as a priority in the Integrated Transport Strategy.*
- Upgrade the Dandenong Creek Trail at Jells Park by providing an improved surface, line marking and signage to legibility and continuity of the main trail. *Parks Victoria is responsible for the section within their park.*

- Construct an improved crossing at Highbury Road on the Gardiners Creek Trail to provide a safe and legible continuation of the trail. *A signalised pedestrian crossing exists at this location and only minor works are considered necessary on the Monash side.*
- Identify any areas of the Gardiners Creek Trail that carry high pedestrian and cyclist volumes and investigate the feasibility of mode separating where possible. *As this proposal would significantly affect areas of bushland along Gardiners Creek Trail, there is no proposal to separate the cycling and pedestrian movements.*
- Extend the Scotchmans Creek Trail off-road from MARC to Sunnybrook Drive. *There are currently limited opportunities to provide an off-road path without significant land acquisition along the area that effectively follows the route of the transmission towers.*

CONSULTATION

Consultation on any of these projects will be undertaken as part of the planning and design process as they become funded.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are not expected to be any additional budgetary implications for Monash as a result of this strategy. The regional trail projects that have been listed within or along Monash's borders are already identified by Council as future opportunities and this Strategy identifies their importance within the broader region.

It is anticipated that the *Melbourne Eastern Regional Trails Strategy* will strengthen the case for external funding to be allocated to regional trails in Monash.

CONCLUSION

The *Melbourne Eastern Regional Trails Strategy* has been developed through detailed consultation and research to identify future opportunities for enhancing and creating regional trails. A listing of action items for Monash are detailed in the Strategy that generally support existing Council strategies and direction. Furthermore, the report findings provide an increased opportunity to attract external funding for trail projects of regional significance in Monash.