

REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

9.4 HORSHAM BYPASS PLANNING PROJECT

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Directorate:	Infrastructure
File Number:	F24/A05/000001

Officer Conflict of Interest

Officer disclosure in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 130:

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Status

Defined as confidential information in accordance with Local Government Act 2020 – Section 3(1):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reason: Nil

Appendix

Nil

Purpose

To present a status report to Council on the Horsham Bypass Planning Project.

Summary

- Council appointed 11 representatives to a Community Reference Group (CRG) to advise Council on the Horsham Bypass Planning project at its March 2026 meeting.
- The first meeting of the CRG was held on 9 April 2026. Minutes of that meeting are now on Council's Bypass Project web page.
- The second meeting of the CRG was held on 28 April 2026. The main items on the agenda for that meeting included:
 - Finalisation of the survey to be used for first engagement task
 - Finalisation of the consultant brief to assist with the evaluation process.
- Minutes of that meeting will be on Council's Bypass Project web page after confirmation at the next CRG meeting.
- Community feedback on the survey was open until 15 June 2026. This feedback will be reviewed at the CRG's next meeting scheduled for 8 July 2026.
- A process to seek quotations for consultant support to the project has also been underway.

Recommendation

That Council note the progress on the Horsham Bypass Planning Project.

REPORT

Background

The second meeting of the CRG for the Horsham Bypass Planning Project occurred on 28 April 2026, with the two key purposes being to:

- Develop the scope of the first community engagement task for the project, seeking to understand the community's values and issues that may be impacted by a bypass.
- Finalise a consultant's brief to assist the CRG in its preparation of evaluation criteria from this community feedback, and then to evaluate a range of bypass route options against these criteria.

The draft minutes of the CRG's meeting will be presented to Council after confirmation by the CRG at its next meeting.

Discussion

A key principle of Council's approach to the Horsham Bypass Planning project is the importance of understanding the community's views about a bypass and various bypass alignment routes.

To inform this, a community survey was undertaken to seek comprehensive information about how the community feels they may be impacted by a bypass, by identifying the values and issues that are important to them about where they live, work and recreate, and how these may be affected by a bypass.

The survey was open from 8 May to 15 June 2026, both online and paper-based.

A total of 453 submissions were received. The information from these submissions is currently being collated, for presentation to the CRG at its next meeting.

Some key demographics about the survey respondents include:

- 94% of the respondents either live or work in Horsham municipality
- 60% classified themselves as residents,
- 21% classified themselves as business owners or workers
- 10% classified themselves as farmers
- 57% were from urban areas, 43% from rural areas

Of note, 87.6% of respondents responded positively to the question "is a bypass important for Horsham", with 6.3% saying no and the balance uncertain.

The survey results will shortly be presented to the CRG to develop a set of evaluation criteria on which a range of bypass route options will be analysed.

A key next step for the CRG will be the development of a series of bypass route options to evaluate, against these criteria.

A request for quotations (RFQ) process has also been conducted seeking proposals from consultants to assist the CRG in its evaluation process. The RFQ has recently closed and is currently being assessed to select a preferred consultant.

Options to Consider

A subsequent stage of the CRG's work will be to develop a series of route alignment options that will be evaluated against a set of community-based criteria.

Note that at this stage neither Council nor the CRG have prepared any route options that might be considered for a Bypass.

Sustainability Implications

Nil

Community Engagement

The recently completed survey is the first key engagement process a part of the Bypass Planning Project.

Results from the survey will be developed through the CRG and then shared with the Community in the months ahead.

A subsequent stage of engagement, due at the end of 2026, will be seeking the community's feedback on the evaluation process conducted by the CRG.

A web page is now live for this project, featuring a range of information, including background to the project and documents from previous bypass studies. The link to this page is <https://www.hrcc.vic.gov.au/Our-Council/Projects-and-Works/Horsham-Bypass-Planning> or by Googling "HRCC Bypass Planning".

Innovation and Continuous Improvement

Nil

Collaboration

Nil

Financial Implications

Funding for this project \$55,000 has been included in the 2026-27 Council budget that was adopted on 15 June 2026. This funding will be used to engage the consultant referred to above, and related tasks.

Regional, State and National Plans and Policies

A bypass of Horsham has featured as a priority in regional transport plans for a considerable period.

Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

Major initiative 9.1 of the 2025-29 Council Plan is "Confirm a preferred route for the Horsham bypass"

Risk Implications

Key aspects to manage risks with the identification of a preferred Bypass alignment include:

- Strong community participation
- A transparent approach, i.e. availability of all relevant documents
- An objective evaluation process, developed with the community
- Not pre-empting the outcome.

The recently completed and further engagement tasks are important components in community participation and developing an objective evaluation process.

Conclusion

This report provides an update to Council and the community on progress with the Horsham Bypass Planning Project.