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## 11.1 Transport, movement and access response to impacts of COVID-19

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Reference: D20/96634

Authoriser: Director Planning and Place Making

### Purpose

1. This report outlines the progress made towards catering for the physical distancing, transport and movement needs of the Yarra community and visitors in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (COVID-19).
2. This report provides a high level summary of the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials proposed by officers.
3. This report sets out how officers plan to inform, communicate and involve the Yarra community in the transport response to COVID-19 both now and going forward.
4. This report recognises that further progress will also be made between the publication of this report and the Council meeting of 23 June 2020.
5. A verbal update on this progress will be provided at the Council meeting of 23 June 2020.

### Background

6. The way people work, live, shop and move around has changed to varying extents as a result of the impacts of COVID-19.
7. This is clearly reflected in the current transport, movement and access context with lower levels of traffic on Yarra's roads and fewer people using public transport.
8. It is possible that these travel patterns will continue to some extent for a period of time, including in an immediate post COVID-19 context and into the future, particularly with continued physical distancing considerations in many aspects of life and while community health concerns are prevalent.
9. Likewise, physical distancing requirements have impacted on the operation of Yarra's local economy and how people access services. It is noted that this is a dynamic situation as businesses start to reopen and/or respond to the progressive easing of some restrictions.
10. This is a universal challenge and many cities around the world have responded by re-examining how road space is used and whether it is possible to provide additional space or safer streets for people in terms of movement (i.e. walking and cycling) and for everyday living (i.e. socialising or meeting at a local business).
11. This is a key challenge for Yarra given:
  - (a) its dense urban environment and limited space to safely cater for all transport modes and street activity;
  - (b) the high usage of public transport by the community and visitors to move around pre-COVID-19; and
  - (c) the struggles faced by local business during COVID-19 and potential uncertainty going forward.
12. The need to respond to this challenge has been identified by Council via:
  - (a) a resolution to the General Business Motion on 5 May 2020;
  - (b) a Special Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting on 29 May 2020;
  - (c) a Council resolution on this matter on 2 June 2020;
  - (d) a Special Councillor Briefing on 9 June 2020; and

- (e) this report to the Council meeting of 23 June 2020.
13. In particular the Council resolution of 5 May 2020 recognised:
- (a) there is a need to respond to the transport, movement and access needs of the community through the provision of a range of safe transport options;
  - (b) there is an opportunity to re-examine how we view and use public spaces especially road space given the reduced levels of traffic using roads in Yarra; and
  - (c) there is also an opportunity to respond to the emergency situation by fast tracking projects particularly through the use of temporary infrastructure and a mindset of acting now and adapting over time.

Project identification

- 14. Council has already received many ideas provided by the community, and via the BAC meeting, about possible projects and initiatives to address the physical distancing, transport and movement needs of the community.
- 15. Council officers have actively engaged with some local businesses (within available resources) to understand the potential needs of businesses at this current time.
- 16. Council officers are also working with neighbouring Council's to see if there is an opportunity to align or jointly investigate projects.
- 17. The type and number of projects that have been suggested are wide ranging, and there is a range of different views in the community.
- 18. However, it is clear that there are some common themes in the feedback provided, including:
  - (a) a desire to address community health concerns particularly around physical distancing and catering for vulnerable people;
  - (b) a desire for Council to consider transport projects that provide a greater choice of safe transport options for local and longer journeys;
  - (c) a desire to help the local economy; and
  - (d) a desire to act now.
- 19. Officers have undertaken a systematic approach to the identification of some proposed smaller and larger scale trials and the prioritisation of possible future projects based on community ideas.
- 20. Key to this is the development of an Assessment Tool which prioritises projects based on the response to COVID-19 and alignment with Council's transport and safety objectives.
- 21. The Assessment Tool has been developed to manage and assess a large number of projects in a clear, informed and consistent manner to guide decision making on immediate project priorities, and the on-going project delivery pipeline thereafter.
- 22. This approach enables a balanced view of each project to be taken and for all projects to be directly compared in terms of effectiveness, adaptability, impacts, delivery timeframes, and cost.
- 23. It also provides a one stop shop for documenting which COVID-19 response projects have been considered and how they perform. In some cases there are multiple strategic options for delivering a project, like a strategic bike corridor.
- 24. The assessment tool can also be used to assess these particularly where there are competing demands for use of space and a decision needs to be made on how it can be best used in the context of a COVID-19 response.
- 25. This approach is key to be able to manage the transport, movement and access response to COVID-19 within the resources available to Council.

26. Many of the initially identified Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials (discussed later in this report) are resource intensive not only in terms of design and implementation, but also in terms of ongoing monitoring and facilitating and channelling ongoing community input to best learn from community experiences, and if necessary, adapt to concerns especially if there is identified safety issues.
27. The Assessment Tool allows officers to fairly and equitably manage and prioritise community ideas while also managing all other aspects of project delivery and evaluation within resources available.
28. All community ideas received so far have been assessed, along with ideas developed by officers, using the Assessment Tool.
29. Approximately 80 projects have been reviewed using the Assessment Tool so far.
30. Other community ideas yet to be received will also be reviewed and prioritised using the Assessment Tool.
31. From the 80 projects identified so far, some initial trials have been undertaken (see below) and eight larger scale Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials have been identified for consideration by Council in this report.
32. Council officers are also in the process of investigating additional projects with neighbouring Councils and the Department of Transport (DoT).

#### Initial Trials

33. Officers have delivered some initial small scale trials while larger scale trials were being developed.
34. These trials have included:
  - (a) the placement of social distancing markers outside Yarra Primary School for parents waiting to collect their children. This trial was undertaken with a view to identifying the cost and installation of suitable products for other schools to follow (if desired) in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training;
  - (b) the placement of social distancing stickers at school crossings in Yarra;
  - (c) the development and installation of proposed leisure walking circuits that provide alternatives to Yarra's trails and visit various local activity areas, to support physical activity, physical distancing and promote sites of cultural significance and local economic development;
  - (d) working with traders on Queens Parade to manage the footpaths outside premises to provide an appropriate balance between street trading activity and the physical distancing requirements of businesses, customers and people passing along Queens Parade;
  - (e) removal of some carspaces outside 4 café premises to increase the waiting area (through use of the kerbside area), and
  - (f) the provision of additional space to allow pedestrians improved physical distancing outside Piedimonte's Supermarket in Fitzroy North through the removal of some carspaces).

Note: Council officers have also been exploring the reallocation of road space (in particular on-street parking spaces) as a means for some other businesses to meet current and future physical distancing requirements.

35. It is noted that of the 12 businesses that were initially approached, only four were interested in taking up this kerbside option at this time. In these 4 kerbside areas officers have installed some temporary barriers on 6 June 2020 on a one month trial basis.
36. Council officers are engaging further with these businesses regarding the opportunity for them to install furniture and seating (to act as a parklet); this may be able to be extended to other businesses as further trials.

37. This opportunity will however, be subject to identifying and addressing any issues around public safety and local laws, particularly in situations where there is significant passing vehicular traffic.
38. It is noted that any trial of the placement of seating and furniture in parklets (at the current trial sites or subsequently identified locations) will provide ongoing information to Council officers on any next steps, noting that there is unlikely to be a one-sized-fits-all approach.
39. Council officers will explore parklets at other locations where demand exists, noting that there may be a cost to businesses to install and manage the parklets which will be determined and agreed on a case by case basis.
40. A verbal update on the trial will be provided at the Council meeting on 23 June 2020.

Proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials

41. The proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials have been identified using the Assessment Tool and have also been further informed by the following considerations:
  - (a) trials that may become more difficult to deliver as time goes on;
  - (b) trials where there are minimal competing objectives (or trials that can facilitate competing objectives). For example, installing a temporary bicycle lane may meet certain transport objectives, but in turn could hamper the recovery of a local economy where there is a demand to use the same road space to service a business (i.e. a parklet or the continued use of on-street parking);
  - (c) trials that allow Council to act now and adapt over time primarily through the use of temporary or easily modified infrastructure - or remove the temporary infrastructure, accept and learn from any setback, and move on; and
  - (d) trials that address localised community needs and when combined together work towards a regional or strategic objective for Council (see proposed Heidelberg Road to CBD/Church Street safer cycle route).
42. All of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials closely align with many Council strategies, policies and objectives.
43. It is noted that some of the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials would need approval from DoT.
44. It is also noted that some of the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials may be subject to Ministerial approval.
45. Officers are currently working through the formal approvals process with DoT so this could be actioned in an expedited manner should Council resolve to proceed with the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.
46. A verbal update on progress regarding DoT approvals will be provided at the Council on 23 June 2020.
47. The Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials proposed by officers are summarised in Table 1, with location plans provided in Attachment 1.

**Table 1: Proposed Stage1 COVID-19 Response Trials**

Stage 1 Trial	Summary of key considerations
Addressing local community needs and key missing links in cycle network between Heidelberg Road and CBD/Church Street (see next four projects)	
Closure of Trenerry Crescent, Clifton Hill (under Eastern Freeway overpass) to traffic in both directions (all cyclists and pedestrian	Trial road closed using temporary barriers and signage. Responds to immediate physical distancing issue on adjacent Capital City and Merri Creek trails by providing additional space. Responds to a missing link in strategic cycle network given

<p>movements to be retained)</p>	<p>safety and amenity issues for cyclists sharing this section of the street with road traffic.</p> <p>Responds to safer routes to local schools for non-car traffic.</p> <p>Provides indirect response to other safety issues in surrounding streets due to a reduced level of traffic.</p> <p>No loss of parking.</p> <p>For some journeys, it would require the local community to travel further by car. Travel times on adjacent arterials are much lower in current context.</p> <p>Temporary closure can be easily adapted to one way or removed if there are notable safety issues.</p> <p>Subject to DoT / Ministerial approval.</p>
<p>Reallocation of some road space to cyclists at Johnston Street and Nicholson Street intersection, Abbotsford (eastbound bus lane on Johnston Street and northbound traffic lane on Nicholson St) to form a part protected intersection</p>	<p>Traffic lanes closed using temporary barriers and signage.</p> <p>Responds to immediate physical distancing issue at this location due to narrow footpaths and pre COVID-19 safety issues (cyclist use footpaths).</p> <p>Responds to missing link in strategic cycle network and numerous reported cyclist safety concerns pre-pandemic.</p> <p>Responds to safer routes to local schools for non-car traffic.</p> <p>No loss of parking.</p> <p>Temporary lane closures can be easily adapted or removed if there are notable safety issues.</p> <p>Subject to DoT / Ministerial approval.</p>
<p>Centre median preventing east-west movements across Nicholson Street, between Mollison Street to Langridge Street (all cyclists and pedestrian movements to be retained)</p>	<p>Council adopted Local Area Place Making (LAPM 13) project to be delivered with temporary infrastructure</p> <p>Responds to localised pedestrian and cyclist safety need due to a high number of conflicting traffic movements.</p> <p>Responds to safer routes to local schools for non-car traffic.</p> <p>No loss of parking.</p> <p>For some journeys, it would require residents and visitors to travel further by car. Travel times on adjacent local roads are much lower in current context.</p> <p>Temporary closure can be easily adapted to one way or removed if there are notable safety issues.</p> <p>Subject to normal DoT approvals. As this is an approved Council project, officers will work to an early to mid-July 2020 implementation date.</p>
<p>Elizabeth Street protected bicycle lanes trial  (Council approved trial pre Covid-19 to be delivered July 2020)</p>	<p>Council approval is in place (Dec 2019) to undertake the trial at this location.</p> <p>Responds to a missing link in strategic cycle network</p> <p>Connects into City of Melbourne protected bicycle lanes on Albert Street</p> <p>Reduction in parking supported by extensive investigation</p> <p>As this is an approved Council project, officers will work to an early to mid-July 2020 implementation date.</p>

Individual projects that address localised community needs and contribute towards other strategic cycle networks (see next four projects)	
<p>Mid-block closure of Wellington Street, Collingwood to traffic in both directions, between Johnston Street and Alexandra Parade (all cyclist and pedestrian movements to be retained)</p>	<p>Road closed using temporary barriers and signage.</p> <p>Intention is to reduce through-traffic (but retain local access) similar to Napier Street strategic bicycle route and surrounds.</p> <p>Responds to a missing link in strategic cycle network given safety and amenity issues for cyclists sharing this section of the street with road a high level of passing traffic.</p> <p>Responds to safer routes to local schools for non-car traffic.</p> <p>No loss of parking.</p> <p>For some journeys, it would require the local community to travel further by car. Travel times on adjacent arterials are much lower in current context.</p> <p>Temporary closure can be easily adapted to one way or removed if there are notable safety issues.</p> <p>Subject to DoT / Ministerial approval.</p>
<p>Contra-flow bicycle lane on Park Street, North Carlton</p>	<p>High priority project identified by Assessment Tool</p> <p>Responds to immediate physical distancing issue on the Capital City Trail and at the intersection of Nicholson Street and St Georges Road</p> <p>Provides additional capacity on the strategic cycle network</p> <p>No loss of parking</p> <p>Subject to normal DoT approvals. Officers would work to a late June 2020 implementation date.</p>
<p>Closure of Coppin Street on north side of Bridge Road intersection, Richmond, to traffic (all cyclist and pedestrian movements to be retained)</p>	<p>Trial road closed using temporary barriers and signage.</p> <p>Particular focus on providing safe cycle routes to Richmond High School and Bridge Road civic areas and activity centre.</p> <p>Responds to a missing link in the local cycle network given safety and amenity issues for cyclists sharing this section of the street with road traffic.</p> <p>Responds to safer routes to local schools for non-car traffic.</p> <p>No loss of parking.</p> <p>For some journeys, it would require residents and visitors to travel further by car. Travel times on adjacent local roads are much lower in current context.</p> <p>Temporary closure can be easily relocated or removed if there are notable safety issues.</p> <p>Subject to DoT / Ministerial approval.</p>
<p>Conversion of left turning lane to cycle only lane on Gipps Street at intersection with Hoddle Street, Abbotsford/Collingwood</p>	<p>Left turn traffic lane(s) converted to bicycle lanes using temporary infrastructure</p> <p>Facilitates safer east/west cycle movements on Gipps Street and cyclist currently mix with traffic, or use footpath</p> <p>Approved project at this location. Officers would work to late June to early July 2020 implementation date.</p>

48. Many of the trials set out in Table 1 have the potential to make a notable contribution towards providing safer non-car travel options both at a local and a strategic/area-wide context.
49. This is particularly important given the uncertainty around how the Yarra community and visitors will travel in the future, particularly if there less demand to use public transport for community health reasons.
50. Council officers recognise that the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials would result in increased inconvenience for some residents and visitors due to increased travel time for some car journeys.
51. Council officers note that there is likely to be some vocal opposition to the proposed trials, particularly during the early stages of project delivery as the community gets used to the changes.
52. For Yarra to be successful in its transport response to COVID-19, there would be a requirement to ask the community to give the proposed trials a chance, noting that the trials directly try to cater for vulnerable members of the community.
53. This may be a difficult proposition in the early stages of implementation given that there tends to be fewer people walking and cycling in winter months.
54. Importantly, there is potential to work with the community and **adjust and adapt** the trials over time.
55. There is also the ability to remove trials that result in safety issues that cannot be resolved by adapting the trials.
56. Council officers will proactively monitor the installed trials on an ongoing basis.
57. Given the uncertainty around COVID-19, it is proposed that the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials are:
  - (a) reviewed immediately (at any time) if there is an identified safety issue;
  - (b) reviewed 3 months post implementation to allow the community time to adjust and adapt to the changes; and
  - (c) fully evaluated 12 months post implementation to identify whether the trials have been a success and whether there is any demand to continue with any trial.
58. As Council officers will be undertaking ongoing monitoring, there is the opportunity any time post the 3 month review to adapt or end a trial, if it is identified:
  - (a) that the trial is not meeting the objectives; and/or
  - (b) there is an alternative trial or outcome that better meets the needs of the community; and/or
  - (c) the trial is having an unacceptable impact on infrastructure or operations managed by DoT (as determined by DoT and agreed with Council).
59. Council officers would provide periodical project updates on Council's website, particularly in advance of any proposed changes to the installed trials.
60. It is proposed that this would also occur for any future stage COVID-19 Response Trials.

### Communications

61. Communications is key to any success in Council's transport, movement and access response to COVID-19.
62. Communications for the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials would aim to inform the community about what changes are happening to their local streets, with an emphasis on why and the expected benefits.

63. As well as notifying people of works and changes, key messaging would focus on how Yarra is addressing the physical distancing and transport needs of the community by creating friendlier, safer, and more sustainable streets.
  64. While this is a departure from Yarra’s standard consultation process, Council officers would also provide mechanisms for community feedback to help refine these initiatives as the trials progress.
  65. Targeted communications, advising the community of the specific projects in their area, would include:
    - (a) letterbox drops, DL postcards or fact sheets (as required and where appropriate);
    - (b) signage, including corflute posters and potentially footpath decals; and
    - (c) targeted social media, where appropriate.
  66. The Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials would be promoted more holistically to the wider community through Council’s existing channels, including Yarra’s website, which would include maps, images, and question and answer tools.
  67. Information on Council’s transport, movement and access response to COVID-19 would be included Yarra News, Yarra Life e-news, and social media, as well as other targeted e-newsletters, including business and environment.
  68. Proactive media statements would also be prepared to manage risk.
  69. As outlined above, it is anticipated that some members of the community will express concerns about some of the proposed interventions. Undoubtedly, some of the proposals would require changes in behaviour and in some cases this change would entail longer travel times for vehicular traffic for some journeys.
  70. It is important that Council understand this, and is prepared to support the implementation and evaluation of trials, even if there is not universal community support.
- Prioritisation of Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials
71. Should Council resolve to deliver the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials, the proposed next steps and prioritisation of the trials is set out in Table 2.

**Table 2: Prioritisation of Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials and Timelines**

Action / Trial	Timeline
Initial media release on the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials	Day following Council resolution
Initial launch of website and inform community of the project (signage, community notifications)	1 week following Council resolution
Contra-flow bicycle lane on Park Street, North Carlton	Late June 2020
Conversion of left turning lane to cycle lane on Gipps Street at intersection with Hoddle Street, Abbotsford/Collingwood	Late June to early July 2020
Centre median preventing east-west movements across Nicholson Street, from Mollison Street to Langridge Street	Early to mid-July 2020
Closure of Coppin Street on north side of Bridge Road intersection, Richmond	Mid to late July 2020 *subject to Ministerial approval
Closure of Trenerry Crescent, Clifton Hill (under Eastern Freeway overpass) to traffic	Mid to late July 2020 *subject to Ministerial approval



Reallocation of some road space to cyclists at Johnston Street and Nicholson Street intersection, Abbotsford * subject to ministerial approval	Mid to late July 2020 *subject to Ministerial approval
Mid-block closure of Wellington Street, Collingwood between Johnston Street and Alexandra Parade	Mid to late July 2020 *subject to Ministerial approval

NB. It is noted that the Elizabeth Street protected bicycle lanes trial received Council approval in December 2019, and the delivery stage is about to commence. Information to the community regarding this trial installation occurred recently.

Proposals put forward by adjoining Council's and DoT

72. Officers are currently working with counterparts at neighbouring Council's to identify any opportunities for joint projects.
73. This collaboration is occurring concurrently to the design of the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials proposed by officers.
74. Officers are currently in discussions with officers at the City of Banyule and the City of Darebin, to investigate the potential for cycling improvements on Heidelberg Road to form a strategic bicycle route between Banyule and the CBD.
75. This investigation is still at an early stage. A verbal update will be provided at the Council meeting of 23 June 2020.
76. It is understood that the State Government may separately be exploring the implementation of a number of strategic bicycle routes in response to COVID-19.
77. Officers will be working closely with the State Government as and when this project progresses. A verbal update will also be provided at the Council meeting of 23 June 2020.
78. It is noted that these projects may involve the removal of kerbside car parking.
79. At an early stage in these projects, officers would seek direction from Council on the loss of parking, as this would be key to the delivery of these projects.
80. The matters would inform where officers allocate resources in the overall transport response to COVID-19.

Leisure and Walking Circuits

81. Council officers have implemented three leisure and walking circuits in the municipality.
82. The leisure and walking circuits are shown in Attachment 2 and are intended to:
  - (a) provide an alternative to Yarra's busy trails for residents and visitors concerned about social distancing;
  - (b) promote physical activity; and
  - (c) promote sites of cultural significance and local economic development.
83. The leisure and walking circuits are being promoted through the installation of decals and information provided on Yarra's website.
84. The implementation of the leisure and walking circuits do not require external approvals and has been funded via existing budgets.
85. These circuits will be monitored, and if deemed successful, could be extended and/or expanded.

**External Consultation**

86. Council officers have considered all the community ideas provided so far (including those provided during the Special Bicycle Advisory Committee meeting in late May. These ideas have been assessed and prioritised using an Assessment Tool.

87. As said above, Council officers have actively engaged with some local businesses (within available resources) to understand the potential needs of businesses at this current time.
88. Council officers are working with neighbouring Council's to see if there is an opportunity to align or jointly investigate projects.
89. There has been extensive consultation with Department of Transport (DoT) seniors regarding the approval of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.
90. It is noted that some of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials would need approval from DoT.
91. It is also noted that some of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials may be subject to Ministerial approval.
92. Officers are currently working through the formal approvals process with DoT so this could be actioned in an expedited manner should Council resolve to proceed with the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.
93. There has been no formal communication with the public on the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.
94. Subject to Council resolving to proceed with the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials, officers would then inform the public on the implementation of the trials via various means of communication.
95. It is anticipated that there would be community feedback following the implementation of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.
96. Interaction with the community following the implementation of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials would be undertaken as per a communications plan which would also be updated as required.
97. Importantly, there is potential to work with the community and *adapt* the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials over time.

#### Advocacy

98. Significant advocacy has been undertaken by the CEO and senior officers in order to explore and promote initiatives to encourage safe and sustainable travel and to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.
99. This advocacy has included meetings and representations to the Associate Secretary Department of Transport, and his senior staff. Discussions with DoT have focussed on strategic project identification, project approvals (where required) and potential funding of key strategic projects.
100. Project identification and joint advocacy has also occurred with IMAP (Inner Melbourne Action Plan) Councils, with a particular focus on the inner Melbourne cycling network of pathways, and introducing better connections.

#### **Internal Consultation (One Yarra)**

101. There has been extensive internal consultation undertaken in the development and implementation of the initial trials and the development of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.
102. Internal consultation has been undertaken with Council's City Works, Compliance, Communications, Economic Development, Recreation and Leisure, Strategic Transport and Infrastructure, Traffic and Civil Engineering teams.
103. There is an internal officer support team for the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.

## **Financial Implications**

104. While temporary infrastructure is noted to be far less expensive than permanent treatments, there are still costs to Council in terms of resourcing and employing specialist contractors, communications (i.e. producing and delivering notices of works) and the purchase, hire and installation of traffic management equipment and signage.
105. The costs to deliver the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials is currently estimated to be in the order of \$200,000 to \$250,000 (excluding the Elizabeth Street separated bicycle lane trial project which is funded under a separate budget allocation within Council's Budget).
106. The costs to deliver the proposed trials would be determined to some extent whether Council hires or purchases the required traffic management equipment.
107. This would be further influenced by Council's ability to store and/or reuse the traffic management equipment for other trials or other Council projects.
108. A special budget allocation has not been made for the delivery of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.
109. There would be a need to monitor expenditure throughout 2020/21 and it may be necessary to report back to Council on the proposed source of funding for these projects, if either external funding is not provided, or sufficient savings cannot be identified, to cover these costs.
110. The cost to deliver the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials also includes installation and maintenance costs which would need to be absorbed within Council's operational budget.
111. External funding would be pursued where there are opportunities for this to occur.
112. A further update on the funding of the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials will be verbally provided at the Council meeting on 23 June 2020.

## **Economic Implications**

113. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on many aspects of the local economy in Yarra.
114. This is a dynamic situation as many businesses start to reopen and/or respond to the progressive easing of some restrictions associated with COVID-19.
115. Facilitating safe travel and movement for people can assist the local economy.
116. Council officers have actively engaged with some local businesses (within available resources) to better understand the potential needs of businesses at this current time.
117. Council officers have installed trial kerbside spaces (to enable improved physical distancing / waiting areas) at four businesses in Yarra (through removal of some carspaces) on a one month trial basis, as means of seeking some activation of what could be achieved elsewhere in the municipality.
118. Council officers are currently exploring whether furniture and seating could be installed within these areas to create them as small parklets and are in discussion with these café operators.
119. Any trial of the placement of seating and furniture in these areas (at the current trial sites or subsequently identified locations) would provide learnings officers on possible next steps, noting that there is unlikely to be a one-sized-fits-all approach.
120. Council officers will also continue to explore parklets at other locations where demand exists, noting that there may be a cost to businesses to install and manage the parklets which will be determined and agreed on a case by case basis.
121. A verbal update will be provided at the Council meeting of 23 June 2020.
122. Seeking to assist businesses is occurring through these trial installations and also the Council's community support package.

123. As noted above, some of the transport trials would change some travel patterns to a degree, which may provide diversions of travel for some customers to some businesses in the municipality. These are considered relatively minor and should not significantly impact on local trade.

### **Sustainability Implications**

124. The proposed Stage1 COVID-19 Response Trials have the potential to make a notable contribution towards providing safer non-car travel options both at a local and a strategic/area-wide context.
125. The delivery of sustainable transport options is a key sustainability objective for Council.

### **Climate Emergency Implications**

126. The proposed Stage1 COVID-19 Response Trials would promote sustainable forms of transport through providing safer non-car travel options both at a local and a strategic/area-wide context.
127. The delivery of these sustainable transport options aligns very closely with the provisions of the recently adopted Climate Emergency Plan by Council.

### **Social Implications**

128. The intended improved physical distancing for community members as outlined by the proposed trials is consistent with health advice.

### **Human Rights Implications**

129. There are no identified human rights implications associated with the recommendations of this report. The proposals would support the improved safety of community members.

### **Communications with CALD Communities Implications**

130. The communication of various trials and initiatives would be critical to the community's understanding and acceptance of Council's intentions.
131. A communications plan would be developed for each initiative to ensure people understand what is being proposed and why. Various methods would be used, and this may differ for each initiative.
132. A language advisory panel would be included in any future correspondence with residents and owner non-occupiers.
133. This would include contact details and a reference number to access Council's interpreter services.

### **Council Plan, Strategy and Policy Implications**

134. All proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials strongly align with Council strategies and policies particularly in the area of transport and road safety and seeking to assist local businesses.

### **Legal Implications**

135. Pre COVID-19, many of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials would be subject to extensive approval, consultation and reporting processes set out in the Local Government Act (1989) and the Road Management Act (2004) which would take a significant amount of time to navigate.
136. As this is considered by Council to be a response to an emergency situation, the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials would be delivered via applicable powers set out in both Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act (1989) and the Road Safety (Traffic Management) Regulations 2019, which allow Council to install obstructions and barriers on a road on a temporary basis (subject to approval by the State Government in some instances).

137. It is noted that DoT (at operational level) are comfortable with this approach given the immediate need to respond to COVID-19, subject the sign-off of trials from DoT, and where required, at a Ministerial level.

### **Other Issues**

138. No other issues are explored in this report.
139. The report provides a response to various Council resolutions.

### **Options**

#### Option 1 – Proceed with the implementation of proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials

140. Council officers have proposed eight Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials in response to Council's resolution of 5 May 2020 and also having regard to other more recent Council resolutions.
141. Under Option 1, Council officers would:
- (a) initially implement trials currently approved by Council, where DoT approval has already been obtained, or is not required;
  - (b) obtain any formal approvals required from DoT and advise Council if any of the trials are not supported by DoT;
  - (c) inform the community of the upcoming trials and advise why Council is taking this approach and the timing for the implementation of each trial;
  - (d) deliver the trials on the basis that the trials are:
    - (i) reviewed immediately (at any time) if there is an identified safety issue;
    - (ii) reviewed 3 months post implementation to allow the community time to adjust and adapt to the changes;
    - (iii) fully evaluated 12 months post implementation to identify whether the trials have been a success and whether there is any demand to continue with any trial.
  - (e) undertake ongoing monitoring to identify any need to adapt or end any trial post the 3 month review, if it is identified that:
    - (i) that the trial is not meeting the objectives; and/or
    - (ii) there is an alternative trial or outcome that better meets the needs of the community; and/or
    - (iii) the trial is having an unacceptable impact on infrastructure or operations managed by DoT (as determined by DoT and agreed with Council).
  - (f) continue to receive submissions from the community and prioritise these submissions using the Assessment Tool and according to available resources;
  - (g) continue to work with DoT and neighbouring Council's to identify and further investigate joint projects;
  - (h) continue to liaise with the local business community and explore possible options to assist with social distancing requirements;
  - (i) explore external funding opportunities to support these and other initiatives in response to the impacts of COVID-19; and
  - (j) investigate and report to Council on any Future Stage COVID-19 Response Trials as part of Council's transport, movement and access response to COVID-19.
142. All of the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials closely align with many Council strategies, policies and objectives.

143. All of the Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials have been developed with a mindset of acting now and adapting over time, with the opportunity to adapt or end the trial, accept and learn from any actual or perceived setback, and move on.

Option 2 – Proceed with the implementation of (only) some of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials

144. Council may decide to proceed with some, but not all of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.
145. The proposed trials are considered to have equal merit and respond to the physical distancing, movement and access requirements of the community in different ways.
146. It is noted that it may become more difficult to proceed with the proposed trials as time goes on as the community begins to return to some more traditional movements.
147. Under Option 2, Council officers would:
- (a) initially implement trials currently approved by Council, where DoT approval has already been obtained, or is not required;
  - (b) implement trials supported by Council at this stage, subject to DoT approvals as required;
  - (c) seek direction from Council in terms of next steps to understand what type of trials would likely be supported;
  - (d) continue to receive submissions from the community and prioritise these submissions using the Assessment Tool, direction provided by Council and according to available resources;
  - (e) continue to work with DoT and neighbouring Council's to identify and further investigate joint projects;
  - (f) continue to liaise with the local business community and explore possible options to assist with social distancing requirements; and
  - (g) explore external funding opportunities to support initiatives in response to the impacts of COVID-19.

Option 3 – Do not proceed with the implementation of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials

148. Council may decide not to proceed with any of the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.
149. It is noted that this would result in a delay in Council's response to the impacts of COVID-19.
150. In this option, Council officers would then seek direction from Council in terms of next steps to understand what type of trials would likely be supported.
151. Council officers will, most probably, continue to receive submissions from the community and prioritise these submissions using the Assessment Tool, direction provided by Council and according to available resources.
152. Council officers, will nevertheless, continue to work with DoT and neighbouring Council's to identify and further investigate possible joint projects.
153. Council officers will also continue to liaise with the local business community and explore possible options to assist with social distancing requirements;
154. Council officers will explore external funding opportunities to support initiatives in response to the impacts of COVID-19.

Option 4 – Pursue COVID-19 Response Trials not outlined in this report

155. Council may decide to pursue COVID-19 Response Trials not outlined in this report, whether this is in addition, or as an alternative to the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials.

156. In this option, Council officers would review any additional trials put forward by Council using the Assessment Tool and assess this according to available resources.
157. It is noted is that the proposed Stage 1 COVID-19 Response Trials are resource intensive not only in terms of design and implementation, but also in terms of ongoing monitoring and facilitating and channelling ongoing community input to best learn from community experiences, and if necessary, adapt to concerns especially if there is identified safety issues.

### **Conclusion**

158. Council, through its resolutions, has identified a requirement to address the physical distancing, transport and movement needs of the Yarra community and visitors in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (COVID-19).
159. Council, officers have undertaken a number of initial small scale trials in the form of walking routes, physical distancing stickers and trial kerbside areas for waiting areas for some cafes.
160. Council officers will continue to work on these trials and will look to identify other small scale trials.
161. Council officers have developed an Assessment Tool to clarify the objectives and consistently review and prioritise ideas provided by the community and propose to continue doing this going forward.
162. Council officers are working with DoT and neighbouring Council's to identify and further investigate joint projects.
163. Council officers have proposed eight larger scale Stage1 COVID-19 Response Trials for consideration of Council, noting that some of the trials would require formal sign off from the Department of Transport (DoT) and at Ministerial level.
164. It is recommended that Council instruct with the implementation of the suggested Stage1 COVID-19 Response Trials and monitor and review these projects as per the proposals set out in this report.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That Council note the officers report as requested by the Council resolution on 5 May, 2019 regarding opportunities to create improved spaces for cycling and physical distancing, and support for local businesses regarding the current COVID-19 circumstances.
2. That Council note the actions of officers to date and also note the options presented in this report for Council consideration.
3. That Council, having noted the contents of the report and considered the options presented, authorise officers:
  - (a) to proceed with the implementation of the proposed COVID-19 Response Trials, as outlined in Option 1;
  - (b) to initially implement trials currently approved by Council, where DoT approval has already been obtained, or is not required;
  - (c) to obtain any formal approvals required from the Department of Transport (DoT) and advise Council if any of the trials are not be supported by DoT;
  - (d) to inform the community of the upcoming trials and advise why Council is taking this approach and the timing for the implementation of each trial;
  - (e) to deliver the trials on the basis that the trials are:

- (i) reviewed immediately (at any time) if there is an identified safety issue;
  - (ii) reviewed 3 months post implementation to allow the community time to adjust and adapt to the changes; and
  - (iii) fully evaluated 12 months post implementation to identify whether the trials have been a success and whether there is any demand to continue with any trial; and
- (f) to undertake ongoing monitoring to identify any need to adapt or end any trail post the 3 month review, if it is identified that:
- (i) that the trial is not meeting the objectives; and/or
  - (ii) there is an alternative trial or outcome that better meets the needs of the community; and/or
  - (iii) the trial is having an unacceptable impact on infrastructure or operations managed by DoT (as determined by DoT and agreed with Council);
- (g) to continue to receive submissions from the community and prioritise these submissions using the Assessment Tool and according to available resources;
- (h) to continue to work with DoT and neighbouring Council's to identify and further investigate joint projects;
- (i) to continue to liaise with the local business community and explore possible options to assist with physical distancing requirements;
- (j) to explore external funding opportunities to support these and other initiatives in response to the impacts of COVID-19; and
- (k) to investigate and report to Council on any Future Stage COVID-19 Response Trials as part of Council's transport, movement and access response to COVID-19.

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Danny Millican  
**TITLE:** Coordinator Civil Engineering  
**TEL:** 9205 5762

### **Attachments**

- 1 [↓](#) COVID-19 Response Trials (location and concept plans)
- 2 [↓](#) Leisure and Walking Circuits
- 3 [↓](#) Attachment 3 - Action Sheet 9.1 Councillor Stone - Physical Distancing and Public Space Opportunities (Council - 5 May 2020) - general business



**Attachment 1 - COVID-19 Response Trials (location and concept plans)**

**Attachment 1: Proposed COVID-19 Response Trials**

Addressing local community needs and key missing links in cycle network between Heidelberg Road and CBD/Church Street



Overview Plan

Left: Trial locations shown on City of Yarra GIS extract

Right: Trial locations shown on draft Strategic Cycling Corridor Map



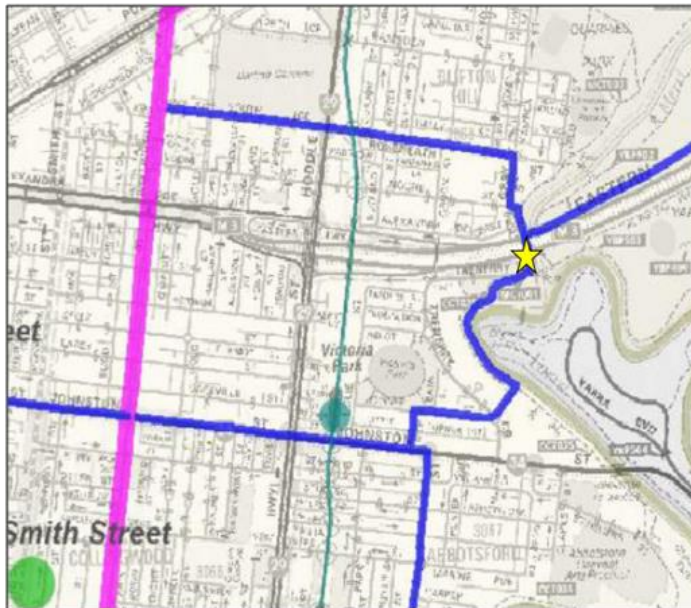
**Attachment 1 - COVID-19 Response Trials (location and concept plans)**

**Attachment 1: Proposed COVID-19 Response Trials**

Addressing local community needs and key missing links in cycle network between Heidelberg Road and CBD/Church Street

Closure of Trenerry Crescent, Clifton Hill (under Eastern Freeway overpass) to traffic in both directions

Location and high level concept plans





**Attachment 1 - COVID-19 Response Trials (location and concept plans)**

**Attachment 1: Proposed COVID-19 Response Trials**

Addressing local community needs and key missing links in cycle network between Heidelberg Road and CBD/Church Street  
Reallocation of some road space to cyclists at Johnston Street and Nicholson Street intersection, Abbotsford (eastbound bus lane on Johnston Street and northbound traffic lane on Nicholson St) to form a part protected intersection

Location and high level concept plans

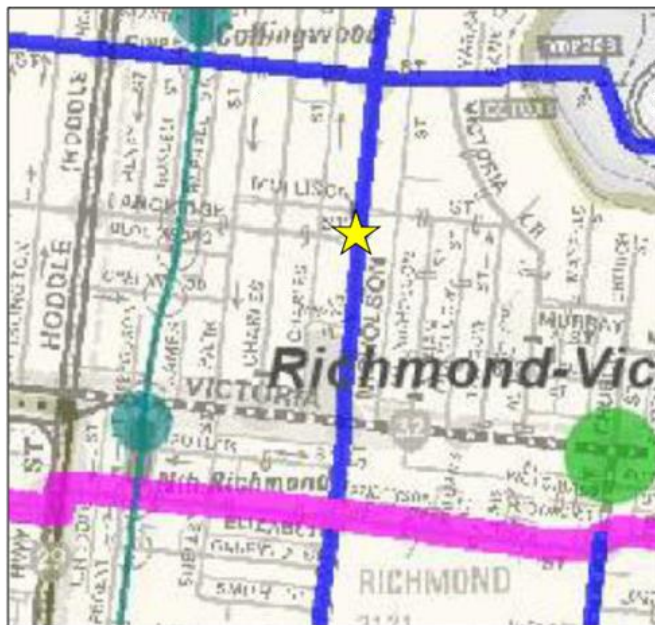


## Attachment 1 - COVID-19 Response Trials (location and concept plans)

### Attachment 1: Proposed COVID-19 Response Trials

Addressing local community needs and key missing links in cycle network between Heidelberg Road and CBD/Church Street Centre median preventing east-west traffic movements across Nicholson Street, between Mollison Street to Langridge Street (all cyclist and pedestrian movements to be retained)

Location and high level concept plans





**Attachment 1 - COVID-19 Response Trials (location and concept plans)**

**Attachment 1: Proposed COVID-19 Response Trials**

Addressing local community needs and key missing links in cycle network between Heidelberg Road and CBD/Church Street

Elizabeth Street protected bicycle lanes trial  
(Council approved trial pre COVID-19 to be delivered July 2020)

Location and high level concept plan



**Attachment 1 - COVID-19 Response Trials (location and concept plans)**

**Attachment 1: Proposed COVID-19 Response Trials**

Individual projects that address localised community needs and contribute towards other strategic cycle networks  
Mid-block closure of Wellington Street, Collingwood to traffic in both directions, between Johnston Street and Alexandra Parade  
(all cyclist and pedestrian movements to be retained)

Location and high level concept plans





**Attachment 1 - COVID-19 Response Trials (location and concept plans)**

**Attachment 1: Proposed COVID-19 Response Trials**

Individual projects that address localised community needs and contribute towards other strategic cycle networks

Contra-flow bicycle lane on Park Street, North Carlton

Location and high level concept plan



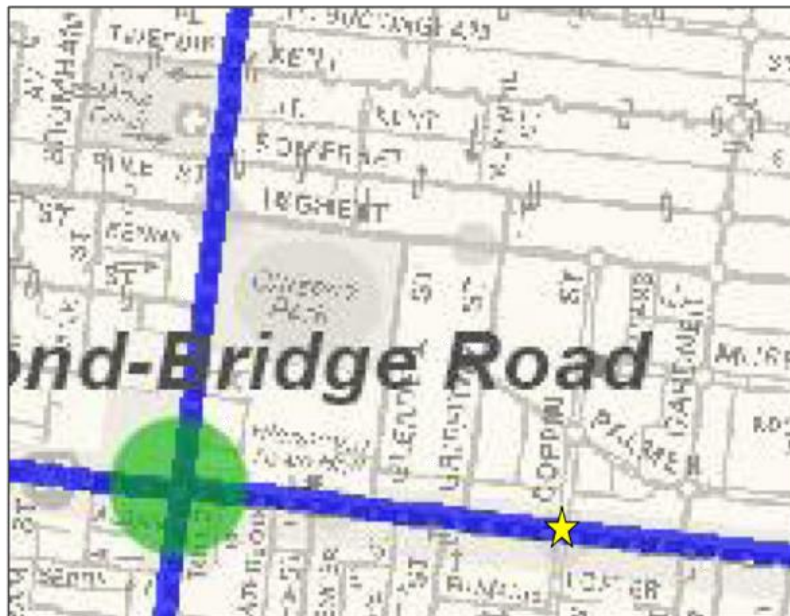
**Attachment 1 - COVID-19 Response Trials (location and concept plans)**

**Attachment 1: Proposed COVID-19 Response Trials**

Individual projects that address localised community needs and contribute towards other strategic cycle networks

Closure of Coppin Street on north side of Bridge Road intersection, Richmond to traffic  
(all cyclist and pedestrian movements to be retained)

Location and high level concept plans





**Attachment 1 - COVID-19 Response Trials (location and concept plans)**

**Attachment 1: Proposed COVID-19 Response Trials**

Individual projects that address localised community needs and contribute towards other strategic cycle networks

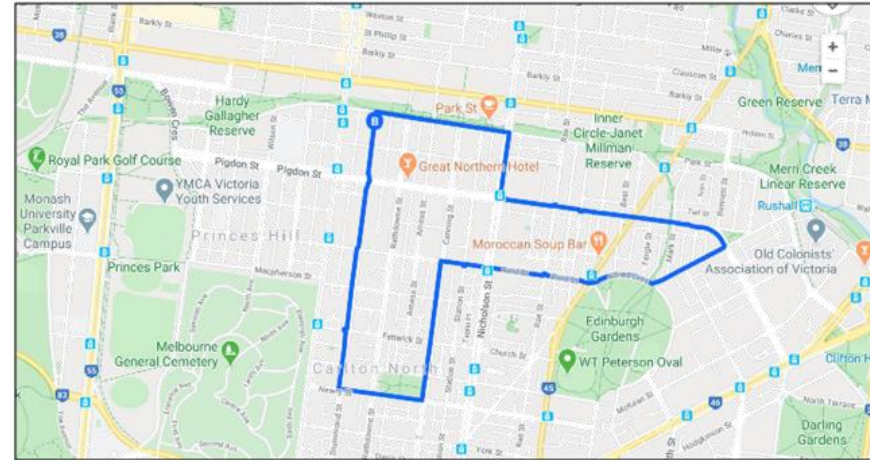
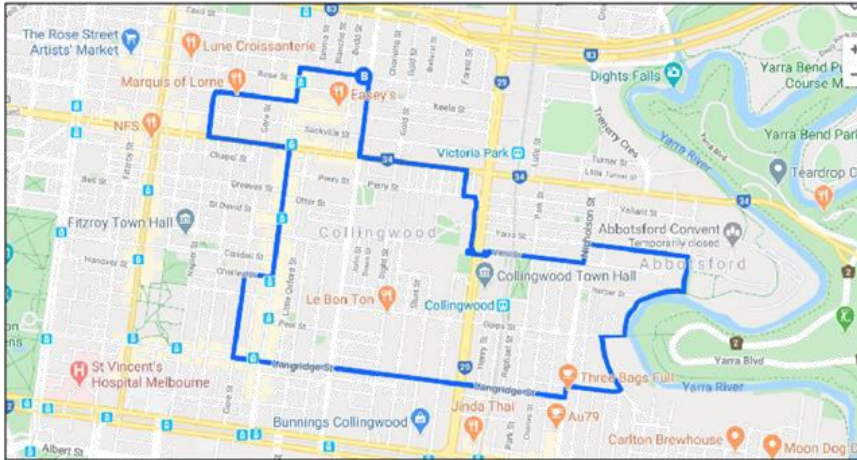
Conversion of left turning lane to cycle only lane on Gipps Street at intersection with Hoddle Street, Abbotsford/Collingwood

Location and high level concept plans



Attachment 2 - Leisure and Walking Circuits

Attachment 2: Leisure and Walking Circuits



Top left: Langridge Ward Circuit, Abbotsford and Collingwood (approx. 6.5km)

Bottom left: Melba Ward Circuit, Richmond (approx. 3.7km)

Top right: Nicholls Ward Circuit, Carlton North and Fitzroy North (approx. 5 km)



## Attachment 3 - Attachment 3 - Action Sheet 9.1 Councillor Stone - Physical Distancing and Public Space Opportunities (Council - 5 May 2020) - general business

**COUNCIL**

**RESOLUTION ITEM 6624**

**TO: DIRECTOR CITY WORKS AND ASSETS**

**FOR ACTION**

### 9.1 COUNCILLOR STONE - PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND PUBLIC SPACE OPPORTUNITIES – GENERAL BUSINESS

**Meeting Date:** 5/05/2020

**Target Date:** 2/06/2020

**Notes:**

**File Number:**

#### 9.1 Councillor Stone - Physical Distancing and Public Space Opportunities

##### Background

The result of the recent restrictions on movement as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and Victoria's State of Emergency has been an emptying of Yarra's streets to vehicle traffic and an increase in pedestrians and cycling. Whilst this has been most noticeable on shared paths through open space, it is also seen in our shopping strips and commercial precincts. Council has had feedback that this has been welcomed by many in the community.

Whilst some restrictions are likely to be lifted in the near future, there will remain a requirement for physical distancing for some time to come, possibly a year or more.

Physical distancing will be a challenge in some locations in Yarra with narrow footpaths and busy commercial centres. Pedestrians will find separation difficult as they go about their regular activities in a busier environment.

Yarra Council has also received numerous approaches from residents interested in taking this opportunity to re-examine how we view and use public spaces especially road space. There is an opportunity to introduce some short-term measures which both facilitate physical distancing in our busier areas, but also a better use of public space where more space is devoted to people. Some of these measures could become long term if successful.

Yarra Council officers are aware of these community submissions for better use of public spaces and have begun work to identify opportunities and innovative solutions where pressure points and concentrations of pedestrian activity currently exist. This motion builds on that work and ensures a progress report is provided to Council and the community.

#### COUNCIL RESOLUTION

**Moved:** Councillor Stone

**Seconded:** Councillor Bosler

1. **That officers bring a report to the June cycle of Council meetings outlining:**

- (a) identified locations in Yarra's public spaces where physical distancing will be hard to achieve once current restrictions are lifted;
- (b) measures which can be taken to increase the opportunities for physical

**Attachment 3 - Attachment 3 - Action Sheet 9.1 Councillor Stone - Physical Distancing and Public Space Opportunities (Council - 5 May 2020) - general business**

distancing at these locations;

- (c) other opportunities to simultaneously achieve Council objectives such as improving pedestrian facilities, improving bike lanes, increased street greening, increased opportunities for connectivity, increased opportunities for passive recreation whilst maintaining physical distancing; and
- (d) a selection of such projects which could be implemented quickly and cost effectively by Council and a further selection of such projects proposed for any future state or federal funding opportunities as part of an economic stimulus programme.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**ACTION TAKEN BY OFFICER**

Please provide information regarding your work on this action in the notes section of TRIM. Do not update this Word document.