



An explanation regarding the Rushall Reserve project

At the Council Meeting on 19 March 2019, Council considered an officer's report regarding the future of a proposed shared path to be constructed in Rushall Reserve.

In addition to the officer's report, Council received a number of submissions from members of the public, as well as taking the opportunity to ask a number of questions of submitters and Council officers.

Following a debate, Council considered two motions on the matter.

The first of these motions was lost.

The second of these motions was carried and became the Council resolution.

Later in the meeting (during Urgent Business), a concern was raised about the meaning of the word 'suspend' in Council's earlier resolution and advice was sought about how to change this word for one that more clearly demonstrated Council's intention not to proceed with the project and could not be interpreted as suggesting that it had only been put on hold temporarily.

Council was advised that meeting procedures do not allow the wording of a resolution to be altered after it has been carried, and the only mechanism available to Council would be to rescind the motion and consider the item afresh.

Council then resolved to rescind the earlier motion.

Immediately following the rescission, a motion was put to the Council which was identical to that earlier motion, with the exception that the word 'suspend' had been replaced with 'not proceed with'.

All of the motions and procedural motions appear in the minutes of the Council meeting, and the debate can be heard in the audio recording – both of which are available from Council's website.

Council's final resolution regarding this project appears over the page.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

1. That Council notes:
 - a) the officer report and referral advice received during the planning permit application process;
 - b) that the ability to construct a shared path located between South Morang railway line and Merri Creek cliff face has become more complex and costly due to:
 - i) the need for geological testing of the cliff face;
 - ii) the proximity to railway and power company infrastructure;
 - iii) the financial risks associated with potential disruption to railway operations.
2. That Council acknowledges:
 - a) the history of the proposed Rushall Reserve Shared path project;
 - b) the significant effort of Council officers to undertake design work, community and stakeholder consultation;
 - c) those community members who have participated in the consultation processes over a number of years;
 - d) the continuing need for improvements to the Merri Creek trail as a significant off-road cycling path in Yarra;
 - e) the continuing need for pedestrian access from the Southern end of Rushall Reserve.
3. That Council resolves to:
 - a) not proceed with the current Rushall Reserve Shared Path project;
 - b) withdraw the current planning permit application;
 - c) direct officers to advise relevant parties;
 - d) continue its commitment to fund and deliver improvements to Yarra's off-road shared path network.
4. That in relation to Council resolutions concerning other improvement works at the Reserve, Council note:
 - a) that the proposed drinking fountains, new seating and the intended landscape improvements processes along the creek should be progressed as soon as possible, consistent with previous Council resolutions: and
 - b) Officers will provide a further report to Council within the next three months regarding a process for engagement with the local community concerning other possible general and specific amenity improvement opportunities to the Reserve, such report to include:
 - i) an outline of appropriate community engagement options to gather broad community opinions on desirable improvements for Council consideration;
 - ii) a review of appropriate improvements to directional and interpretive signage, appropriate new plantings/revegetation and drainage aspects, and
 - iii) a review of whether or not the existing asphalt path through the Reserve should be removed, or rather, retained, extended or replaced with turf.
5. That Council directs officers to report to Council in the August 2019 meeting cycle on the viability of other off-road cycling projects on the Merri Creek trail with advice from the Bicycle Advisory Committee and being consistent with the 2016 Bicycle Refresh Strategy.
6. That Council, in advising VicTrack of its decision not to proceed with the shared path, refer VicTrack to concerns raised by the community regarding the use of the informal goat track on VicTrack land and requests it to deal with those through appropriate safety mechanisms including protection along the escarpment.