

Public Question – Council Meeting 23 April 2025

Full response – T Koops

Question

The status of the proposed Woodend - Macedon - New Gisborne - Riddells Creek shared trail lacks transparency and appears to have blown-out in terms of budget and completion date. In relation to this project would it be possible for council to provide something for ratepayers which in the one document sets out:

- the initial total project cost expected before commencement and the cost now forecast, and reason for difference;
- the initial completion date expected and the date now forecast, and reason for difference;
- information on ALL lifecycle project cost components from inception including feasibility, design, construction, maintenance and rehabilitation, both incurred to date and budgeted;
- details of the competitive tendering processes associated with each of the components including the engagement of Newearth Constructions and any private consultants;
- all major changes in the specification of the shared trail in terms of engineering and the trail surface, and the reason for these; and
- additional council plans for cycling related initiatives including criterium cycling circuit at Gisborne Regional Sports Hub, Regional MTB Park/s or any other potential projects being considered.

Answer:

Thank you for recent question in relation to the Macedon Ranges Shared Trails project presented during Question Time at the recent Council Meeting held on 23 April 2025. As noted in the Council Meeting, officers committed to responding to your question outside of the meeting to allow for a

more detailed response to your questions. Please note the details contained within this response will form the basis of a project update on the project webpage within Council's website anticipated shortly to provide consistent information for the broader community with an interest in the Shared Trail project.

The status of the proposed Woodend - Macedon - New Gisborne - Riddells Creek shared trail lacks transparency and appears to have blown-out in terms of budget and completion date. In relation to this project would it be possible for council to provide something for ratepayers which in the one document sets out:

1. the initial total project cost expected before commencement and the cost now forecast, and reason for difference?

- The original budget from July 2021 was \$11.24 million funded with \$8.75 million from the Victorian Government's Building Works package, administered by Regional Development Victoria, with Council contributing the remaining \$2.49 million. The revised project budget is now \$12.24 million following an increase of \$1 million added in the 2024-25 Budget.
- The primary reason for the difference in the budget is to accommodate the additional project resources and planning costs associated due to the level of detail and design required to be submitted to multiple agencies/authorities and landowners to satisfy their approval requirements.

2. the initial completion date expected and the date now forecast, and reason for difference?

- The original completion date was targeting March 2024 completion.
- The project has been split in stages, with some stages already complete and others currently under construction, so the completion date will be staggered however we anticipate majority of the project to be completed by the end of this year. This is subject to change pending weather and other unforeseen circumstances
- The main reason for the difference in timing is the challenges in obtaining the necessary planning approvals.

3. information on ALL lifecycle project cost components from inception including feasibility, design, construction, maintenance and rehabilitation, both incurred to date and budgeted?

- The anticipated overall total project cost is \$12.24M Shared Trail budget plus \$90,000 for the initial feasibility study. This amount includes all planning and design related costs.
- The main design and construction contract for the trail is the most significant component of the overall Shared Trail budget which was awarded in early 2022. The initial award cost which included various provisional allowances plus variations approved to date is currently \$7.889 million.

4. details of the competitive tendering processes associated with each of the components including the engagement of Newearth Constructions and any private consultants?

- The original design and construction contract for the Shared Trail project was awarded to Newearth Constructions in early 2022 following a Public Tendering process held in late 2021. Please refer to the link on the project website with the relevant details provided in May 2022 - <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Projects-and-works/Projects/Woodend-to-Riddells-Creek-Shared-Trail-Project/Latest-Updates/Contract-awarded-to-local-company-for-shared-trailsproject>.

5. all major changes in the specification of the shared trail in terms of engineering and the trail surface, and the reason for these?

- Refer to web updates page which includes a number of the alignment changes required to accommodate the various stakeholders via <https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Projectsand-works/Projects/Woodend-to-Riddells-Creek-Shared-Trail-Project>.

6. additional council plans for cycling related initiatives including criterium cycling circuit at Gisborne Regional Sports Hub, Regional MTB Park/s or any other potential projects being considered?

- The fitness and bike loop outlined in the Macedon Ranges Sports Precinct Master Plan was completed as part of Stage 1 works, incorporating a granitic path around the site's perimeter to support informal walking and cycling.

- Council's strategic documents, including the Walking and Cycling Strategy and relevant township transport and movement plans, identify priority actions to enhance walking and cycling opportunities and support active, healthy lifestyles across the shire. Implementation is reviewed annually through Council's budget process, with actions delivered progressively as funding and resources allow.