

7.3 COUNCIL DELEGATE RAIL FREIGHT ALLIANCE

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Attachments: *Nil*

SUMMARY

The Rail Freight Alliance (RFA) is focused on increased rail mode share, providing improved rail connectivity within Victoria (and into neighbouring states) and working to ensure increased investment in Victoria's rail freight system in the future to support the efficient movement of freight across Australia. It is made up of Victorian rural, and regional and metropolitan Local Government Councils of which Mitchell Shire Council joined in February 2020. This now allows us to have a voice at the table at a time when the Shire is the State's fastest growing Local Government region. There is a strong advocacy for the development of the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT) and congestion is recognised as a key inhibitor of our Council's desire to see a healthy, connected and sustainable community.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council nominate Cr _____ as a Councillor delegate to the Rail Freight Alliance.

BACKGROUND

The Rail Freight Alliance is made up of rural, regional and metropolitan municipalities in Victoria, of which Mitchell Shire Council is a member. It is an advocacy and lobby group to improve rail connectivity within Victoria and with the neighbouring States as well as advocating for investment and improvement of Victoria's rail freight system. Mitchell Shire Council joined the Alliance in February 2020. Most transport issues in Victoria cross many local government boundaries and often regional and state boundaries as well. There is a need to inform statewide transport plans about regional issues and ensure there is alignment between State and regional planning documents to allow for clear strategic direction and integration. There is a need for greater and ongoing regional planning in the area of transport which includes rail freight as an integrated part of the transport network. The Alliance collaboration informs and drives that discussion. Member Councils include: Ararat Rural City Council, Buloke Shire Council, Central Goldfields Shire Council, City of Ballarat, City of Melbourne, City of Wodonga, East Gippsland Shire Council, Gannawarra Shire Council, Glenelg Shire Council, Greater City of Bendigo, Greater Shepparton City Council, Hindmarsh Shire Council, Horsham Rural City Council, Latrobe City Council, Loddon Shire Council, Mildura Rural City Council, Moyne Shire Council, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees Shire Council, South Gippsland Shire Council, Southern Grampians Shire Council,

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Strathbogie Shire Council, Swan Hill Rural City Council, Warrnambool City Council, West Wimmera Shire Council and Yarriambiack Shire Council.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

Mitchell Shire's population is growing at a rate of 4.8% a year. This projected growth is changing the characteristics and demographics of the region and putting additional pressure on already strained infrastructure and services.

While the Alliance's key advocacy objectives include rail standardisation of key rail lines in Victoria, upgrading and connecting to a National Rail Freight Network and a seamless freight logistics that will facilitate the movement of bulk freight by rail, rather than by road; it also supports and advocates key conferences to look at the whole of transport network and how it can be improved to support regional, rural and peri urban local government areas. The benefits for Local Government from the achievement of the above objectives include the facilitation of regional economic development through having an efficient, competitive and connective rail freight system. Significant social, environmental and economic community benefits derived from having fewer bulk haulage trucks on our roads. A voice at meetings is critical as Council continues to focus on ensuring the timely provision of required infrastructure and services in order to maintain the liveability of our communities. Our substantial growth presents many exciting opportunities; however, we need the support and partnership of all levels of government to achieve the best possible outcomes for all of our residents.

CONSULTATION

Mitchell Shire Council has attended a number of Rail Freight Alliance meetings. The Council became an official partner of the Alliance in February 2020.

FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The annual subscription to the Rail Freight Alliance is \$3390.

The Alliance meets four times a year, plus hosts a major conference.

There will be minor costs associated with travel to Melbourne.

15 May 2020	RFA Meeting (Melbourne)
4 September 2020	RFA Meeting (Melbourne)
4 December 2020	RFA Meeting (Melbourne)
19 February 2021	RFA AGM (Melbourne)

The cost of the annual conference, to be staged in Melbourne in April 2020 is \$1480 for the two-day event. This does not include travel or accommodation. All costs will be met from the Mayor and Councillors budget.

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

This Alliance supports three of Council's key advocacy objectives:

- The planning for, and construction of the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT)
- The construction and improvement of key road infrastructure to support the development of the Northern Growth Corridor

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- Improved public transport, connectivity, accessibility and appropriateness, particularly for train services

The Victorian Freight Plan Framework has been based on a range of existing state government policies, along with Commonwealth government initiatives, recognising most freight movements in Victoria begin and end on roads managed by local governments. Access to local roads – known as ‘the first and last mile’ – is one of the most significant impediments to efficient end-to-end freight movements in Victoria.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

Risk Ranking is determined using [ROHS201-G1- Corporate Risk Matrix](#). Risk is identified as Low, Medium, High or Very High.

Risk	Risk Ranking	Proposed Treatments	Within Existing Resources?
Council will not have a voice at an alliance which supports our advocacy and planning frameworks	Medium	Attend Rail Freight Alliance meetings	budget allocation is needed
Council fails to capitalise on a collaborative approach through the Rail Freight Alliance to endorse future planning opportunities which reduce congestion and increases infrastructure.	Medium	Continue to advocate and support initiatives of the alliance that will be developed as part of its advocacy framework.	Budget allocation is needed
Council will not have a voice at a conference which supports our advocacy and planning frameworks	Medium	Attend conference	No; budget allocation is needed
Council fails to capitalise on a collaborative approach through the Rail Freight Alliance to endorse future planning opportunities which reduce congestion and increases infrastructure.	Medium	Continue to advocate and support initiatives of the alliance that will be developed at the 2020 congestion conference	No: Budget allocation is needed

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL)

The early provision of comprehensive, well planned accessible and affordable transport infrastructure and services is vital for the long-term sustainability and

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liveability of communities within Melbourne's Growth Areas. It is critical for economic productivity and general liveability.

CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The rights protected in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* were considered in preparing this report and it's determined that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

Providing accessible, affordable and appropriate public and active transport options can have far reaching positive impacts within emerging communities.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

Attendance at the Rail Freight Alliance will provide Council with a strong voice at a regional level to highlight the continuing challenges of a rapidly growing shire and our needs for better freight and people movement as well as significant investment in infrastructure needs for the State's fastest growing municipality. It is also a significant advocacy body to ensure the future of the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT) remains a priority of State and Federal Governments.