

12. URGENT BUSINESS

12.1 Rail Transport Link

Division: Executive Unit
Director: Justine Linley
Author/Position: Justine Linley - Chief Executive Officer

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

Council resolves to:

- 1. Adopt the core principle that any solution(s) for future development of rail infrastructure and networks throughout Victoria, including the Melbourne Airport Rail Link (MARL) should not disadvantage the future growth and prosperity of Ballarat, nor impact in a negative way Ballarat's ability to connect with and travel to and from this state's Capital City;**
- 2. Advocate to both the State and Commonwealth governments the importance of both levels of government committing to a Melbourne Airport Rail Link (MARL) that provides for world-class airport train connectivity; that takes pressure off congested rail networks; that improves regional rail services to the state's largest regional centres; and positions Sunshine as the only stop on an express service between the airport and Melbourne;**
- 3. Work with our counterpart regional cities of Bendigo, Geelong, Warrnambool and Horsham to progress the Western Rail discussion and implementation; and**
- 4. Write to the Prime Minister, the Premier and Victorian Minister for Transport advising Council's position.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is submitted as an item of Urgent Business for consideration by the Council so as to provide clarity on the City of Ballarat's principle position and role in advocacy for a better rail network for Ballarat and the Western Region. It is important that this position is clarified during a period where specific engineering solutions are being expounded which may or may not be to the benefit of Ballarat in the long term.

It is proposed that Council affirm that the City of Ballarat's core principle is that any solution(s) for future development of rail infrastructure and networks throughout Victoria, including the Melbourne Airport Rail Link (MARL) should not disadvantage the future growth and prosperity of Ballarat, nor impact in a negative way Ballarat's ability to connect with and travel to and from this state's Capital City.

On this basis, Council does not intend to promote any one or single proposed solution, but instead continue to advocate for the best solution for Ballarat and the region, whatever that solution might be.

RATIONALE

Over recent months discussions throughout the state and nationally have gathered momentum in relation to planning for the future development of rail infrastructure and networks throughout Victoria.

Following increasing media reporting and speculation regarding the demands on the rail network, both for passenger and freight movement, the City of Ballarat has been involved in a range of forums and discussions and has joined with the Committee for Ballarat and others to ask for further clarity from both the Commonwealth and State governments.

On 10 February 2020, the Mayor together with representatives from the Committee for Ballarat, attended a meeting with the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Jacinta Allan MP to raise concerns and ask questions. Subsequent to that meeting there has been an increase in speculation as to the role of local government in advocating for a solution or solutions to increasing demand pressures on the rail network, both current and into the future.

It is proposed that Council affirm that the City of Ballarat's core principle is that any solution(s) for future development of rail infrastructure and networks throughout Victoria, including the Melbourne Airport Rail Link (MARL), should not disadvantage the future growth and prosperity of Ballarat, nor impact in a negative way Ballarat's ability to connect with and travel to and from this state's Capital City.

Further, it is proposed that Council continue to advocate to both the State and Commonwealth governments the importance of both levels of government committing to a Melbourne Airport Rail Link (MARL) that provides for world-class airport train connectivity; that takes pressure off congested rail networks; that improves regional rail services to the state's largest regional centres; and positions Sunshine as the only stop on an express service between the airport and Melbourne.

It is important that Council continues to work with our counterpart regional cities of Geelong, Bendigo, Warrnambool and Horsham to progress the Western Rail discussion and implementation plans; and to formally seek a progress report from the Minister on the Western Rail project.

LEGISLATION, COUNCIL PLAN, STRATEGIES AND POLICY IMPACTS

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- City of Ballarat Council Plan 2017 – 2021

REPORTING AND COMPLIANCE STATEMENTS

Implications	Considered in Report?	Implications Identified?
Human Rights	Yes	No
Social/Cultural	Yes	Yes
Environmental/Sustainability	Yes	Yes
Economic	Yes	Yes
Financial/Resources	Yes	No
Risk Management	No	No
Implementation and Marketing	Yes	No
Evaluation and Review	No	No

Human Rights – It is considered that this report does not impact on any human rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

Social/Cultural – Planning for long-term reliable, sustainable integrated rail transport for the Ballarat community is important to ensure the social and cultural connection of residents. Critical to our social and cultural wellbeing is assurance that any solutions posed by other tiers of government do not adversely affect the health and wellbeing of residents, nor remove access to key services and facilities provided in metropolitan and central Melbourne.

Environmental/Sustainability – More effective environmentally sustainable transport options, be they for people or goods, has a critical impact on the future of Ballarat and the region. Rail is an accepted method of large-scale people and goods movement that has a lesser impact on the environment.

Economic – Access to key markets, employment opportunities and the costs of doing business are directly affected by reliable access to and from Melbourne. Again, the implications for the growth of Ballarat's economy and gross regional product are part of the reasoning behind the recommendation for Council to take an in principle, approach to rail networks and connectivity.

Financial/Resources – There are no direct financial implications for Council.

Implementation and Marketing – Council will continue to be involved in individual and joint advocacy on better rail connectivity and provision of services for the benefit of Ballarat.

CONSULTATION

Discussion has been held with the Committee for Ballarat and other Regional Cities in the lead up to this report.

OFFICERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Council Officers affirm that no direct or indirect interests need to be declared in relation to the matter of this Report.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil