



**Bass Coast Shire Council
Minutes for Council Meeting
Wednesday, 15 September 2021
Virtual Meeting
1.00pm**

- 1. These minutes are due to be confirmed on 22 September 2021**
- 2. Any decision included in these minutes is subject to change resulting from a rescission motion passed by Council.**

H.8 Growing Suburbs Fund - Inverloch to Wonthaggi Trail

File No:	CM21/482
Division:	Partnerships, Economy and Culture
Council Plan Strategic Objective:	Advocacy

Representing the community

Declaration

The author has no direct or indirect interests in relation to this report.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek authorisation from Council to submit a grant application through the State Government's Growing Suburbs Fund program for the Inverloch to Wonthaggi Trail.

This funding application will assist in delivering regional-level community facilities and key tourism infrastructure as identified in Council's Aspirational Network Pathways Plan 2016.

This report recommends that Council applies to the State Government's Growing Suburbs Fund for the Inverloch to Wonthaggi Trail Project utilising \$4.7 million committed to Aspirational Pathways in Councils Long Term Capital Works Program as Council's contribution. The amounts of \$2.7 million in 23/24 and \$2 million in 2024/25 are recommended to be re phased to 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years if application is successful.

Background

Council pursues external funding opportunities for projects and programs that reflect the community's top priorities, issues and projects and that are consistent with the current Council Plan and Advocacy Strategy.

In recent years, Council has been successful in attracting government support for a range of priority projects across the Shire.

As a member of the Peri-Urban Group of Regional Councils, Council lobbied for and was accepted into the State Government's Growing Suburbs Fund alongside growth area municipalities, which has increased our ability to attract funding to deliver on our priorities.

Council was successful in its application to the Growing Suburbs Fund for \$2.5 million funding towards the Cowes Cultural and Community Centre in 2020. In the March 2021 applications, Council successfully received \$1.4 million funding for the Guy Road Shared Pathway and \$350,000 towards Wonthaggi's Guide Park.

The next round of the Growing Suburbs Fund is currently open for applications and closes on 13 October 2021.

The Growing Suburbs Fund aim is for it to contribute to meeting critical local infrastructure needs for communities in rapidly changing and fast-growing outer suburbs and rural areas such as Bass Coast.

The Fund aims to quickly respond to the pressures being experienced by interface and peri-urban communities by accelerating infrastructure projects that will make a big difference to the liveability and resilience of these communities.

Grants will be targeted towards high priority community infrastructure projects that contribute to:

- the social and economic recovery of communities and groups impacted by coronavirus
- the needs of rapidly growing communities
- local employment creation in both the construction phase and the ongoing operation
- improved local economic conditions in interface and peri-urban communities
- improved capacity for councils to respond to changing community needs and demands
- the delivery of innovative models of integrated/shared community infrastructure
- creating a safe and engaging environment for vulnerable and isolated community members.

In order to submit a project for the Growing Suburbs Fund, a formal Council resolution is required.

Guidelines, including criteria, timelines and eligibility for the Growing Suburbs Fund Program have been reviewed by officers and align to Council's priority strategic projects.

Strategic Basis

Council Plan Objective:

Advocacy - *Representing the community*

Economic Development – *Expanding, attracting and retaining business and investment*

Environment – *Maintain and protect the natural environment*

Governance – *We are responsive, open, transparent and financially sustainable*

Health and Wellbeing – *We are a healthy and active community*

Liveability – *Enjoying the place we live*

Our Character – *Celebrating the uniqueness of our townships*

Major Initiative / Initiative

Implementation of Council's Advocacy Strategy 2018-21

Implementation of the Aspirational Networks Pathways Plan 2016

Strategies / Policies

- Bass Coast Shire Advocacy Priorities 2021
- Bass Coast Shire Council Advocacy Strategy 2018-21

- Disability Action Plan 2016-21
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21
- Gippsland Regional Plan 2021
- Wonthaggi Opportunity Unlocked
- Aspirational Networks Pathways Plan 2016
- Gippsland Tracks and Trail Feasibility Study
- Active Bass Coast 2018
- Victorian Cycling Strategy 2018-28
- Gippsland Regional Plan 2020-2025

Statutory Requirements/Codes/Standards/Policies

Discussion

Inverloch to Wonthaggi Trail Project

The Inverloch to Wonthaggi Trail Project is listed in Council's recently adopted Advocacy Priorities 2021, as a key shared pathway and trail project under 'Tourism Infrastructure – Bass Coast Tracks and Trails'.

The trail is further identified in Council's Aspirational Network Pathways Plan 2016 and aligns with Active Bass Coast, Principal Bike Network (PBN) and identified as a connection in the Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park Draft Access Infrastructure Plan.

This important 14km trail will connect two of our key residential and commercial townships, Inverloch and Wonthaggi, via an off-road shared pathway that will utilise an overland alignment on unused road reserves.

Completion of the trail will connect to a much greater off-road shared pathway link that will extend from Inverloch to Cowes, and link onto a proposed future rail trail link from Woolamai Racecourse to Nyora in South Gippsland. This is identified in the Gippsland Tracks and Trails Strategy as an opportunity that could ultimately link through to the Great Southern Rail Trail and become part of what may arguably be considered as one of regional Victoria's premier cycling and walking experiences.

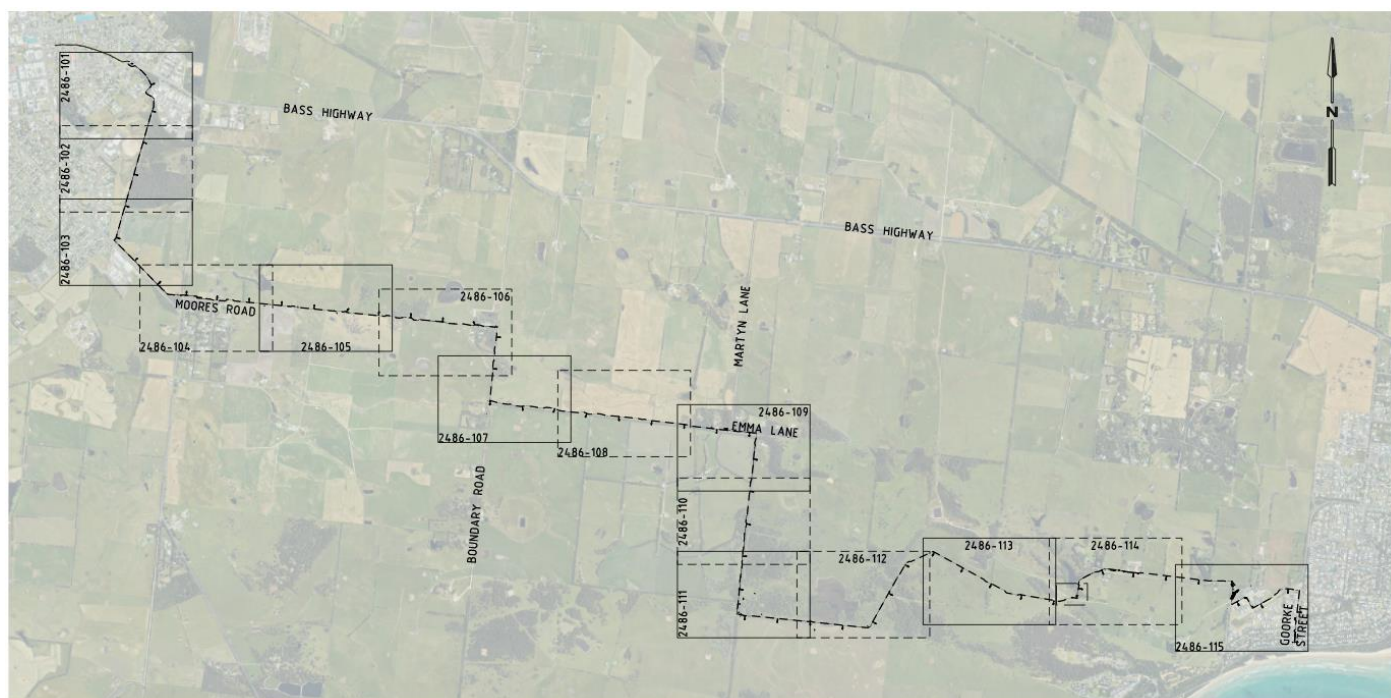
The trail will provide benefits to our visitor economy through its appeal as a nature-based destination attraction and will promote recreational and leisure activities.

Importantly, this trail will improve our communities' health and wellbeing and add value through improved access and inclusion infrastructure.

Detailed design phase is nearing completion with final costings currently being prepared. With preparation underway, it is anticipated that all permits and approvals will be in place with the complete trail to be delivered by June 2025.

Council has allocated funds towards the construction of this path, which would be leveraged against this grant funding opportunity, to potentially reduce overall costs to Council to deliver this project over multiple years.

It is proposed to make a formal application to the State Government Growing Suburbs Fund for a 1.567:1 funding ratio proposal, for a total sum of \$3 million. If successful, this funding will contribute towards the delivery of the trail and provide an important linkage connecting Inverloch to Cowes.



Finances

The following is an overview of current projected funding allocations and proposed funding application amounts for the Inverloch to Wonthaggi Trail:

Project Cost	\$7.7 million
Council contribution	\$4.7 million
Growing Suburbs Fund application	\$3 million

Stakeholders

- Bass Coast Shire Councilors
- Bass Coast Community
- Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee
- Visitors to Bass Coast
- One Gippsland
- Peri-Urban Group of Rural Councils

Other Options

Option 1 – Council may choose to submit an application. By doing so, it provides an opportunity to offset costs to deliver Council's priority projects.

Option 2 – Council may elect not to apply for the Growing Suburbs Fund to support the delivery of the Inverloch to Wonthaggi Trail Project and defer the project.

Conclusion

Council relies upon external grant funding to offset costs and help deliver projects for the community.

The Inverloch to Wonthaggi Trail Project is listed in Council's Advocacy Priorities 2021, Aspirational Network Pathways Plan 2016 and aligns with the strategic objectives of many strategies and policies to support active transport, access and inclusion and visitor attraction through Bass Coast.

This trail will not only connect two of our key towns, but will also connect to a shared pathway network that will connect Inverloch to Cowes. The trail will provide benefits to our visitor economy through its appeal as a nature-based destination attraction and will promote recreational and leisure activities, while improving accessibility, health and wellbeing.

This report recommends that Council supports the Inverloch to Wonthaggi Trail Project funding application to be submitted through the Growing Suburbs Fund, allocating \$4.7 million towards the funding submission.

Recommendation

That Council authorise a submission to the current round of the Growing Suburbs Fund for the Inverloch to Wonthaggi Trail Project and allocate \$4.7 million towards the project.

Attachments

There are no attachments for this report.

Council Decision

Moved: Cr. Leticia Laing / Seconded: Cr. David Rooks

That the recommendation be adopted.

CARRIED