



13.2 ROAD UPGRADE POLICY

Responsible Officer: Manager Assets and Engineering

Due for Review: 2030

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a clear, consistent, and transparent framework for assessing and prioritising upgrades to Council-managed roads. This includes the:

- Sealing of unsealed roads, and
- Widening of narrow sealed roads to improve safety, function, and amenity.

The Policy aligns with Council’s Road Asset Management Plan, long-term financial plan, and strategic objectives.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all unsealed roads and narrow sealed roads within Colac Otway Shire. It covers assessment, prioritization, and funding requirements for upgrades initiated by Council or requested by the community.

This Policy applies to Council managed roads only and excludes works that form part of routine maintenance, renewal activities, or upgrades funded and delivered through subdivision/developer obligations as provided for under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

RATIONALE

This policy addresses the need for a clear, consistent, and transparent approach to upgrading unsealed roads and sections thereof. Colac Otway Shire manages an extensive network of unsealed and narrow sealed roads, both of which pose significant challenges for safety, accessibility, and maintenance. Unsealed roads contribute to dust and corrugations in the summer months and increased potholes in winter. In contrast, narrow sealed roads in both urban and rural areas require widening to improve traffic flow and enhance safety for all road users. Council must also prioritize road upgrades in a sustainable manner that aligns with its financial capacity, ensuring responsible resource allocation while meeting community expectations for improved safety, health, and connectivity.

Upgrades also reduce long-term lifecycle costs, support local economic development, reduce dust-related environmental and health impacts, and respond to community expectations for safer and more reliable road access.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Policy Principles

Council will assess and prioritise road upgrade projects using a documented, objective, weighted-scoring methodology. Decision will be guided by the following principles.

- Equity – Roads serving larger communities or more users receive proportionately greater priority.
- Safety – Projects that address clear safety risks are prioritised.

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- Financial Responsibility – Upgrades must demonstrate whole-of-life cost efficiency and be deliverable within available budgets.
- Transparency & Consistency – All assessments follow the same documented criteria and methodology.

Eligibility Criteria

A road (or section of road) is eligible for assessment when it meets any of the following:

- AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic) ≥ 100
- At least one property served
- Verified safety risks or crash history.
- Emergency access importance
- Network connectivity or strategic importance.

Roads servicing one property will not be considered for sealing unless fully funded by benefiting owners, except where servicing through traffic from a wider area.

Roads expected to undergo future realignment will not be considered for upgrade.

Prioritisation Method

Council will use a weighted scoring system to evaluate eligible gravel roads for sealing, with each assessment criterion showing its assigned weight in brackets, as shown below.

- Lifecycle Cost Benefit (30%)
- Properties Served (10%)
- Traffic Volume (AADT) (25%)
- Recorded crash history and verified safety risks (10%)
- Road Hierarchy (10%)
- Future Growth Potential (10%)
- Traffic Diversion Risk (5%)

Each category receives a score, multiplied by its weight, and summed to determine a Total Priority Score.

Where ties occur, priority is given to:

1. Higher safety need,
2. More properties served,
3. Lower lifecycle cost.

The weighted scoring system will NOT be used for assessing road widening projects. Instead, widening decisions will be based on strategic, functional and safety needs, including:

- Documented crash risk and run-off-road incidents.
- Road geometry and sub-standard pavement width.
- Heavy-vehicle use and freight movement patterns.
- Urban road safety, pedestrian/cyclist needs, and parking considerations
- Network role and connectivity (e.g., collector or strategic link)
- Alignment with:
 - Road Asset Management Plan
 - Asset Plan
 - Long-Term Financial Plan
 - Strategic transport and land-use plans.

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Funding

All approved upgrades must be funded through one or more of the following mechanisms:

- **External Funding** – Grants or contributions from State or Federal Government or other agencies.
- **Council Budget Allocation** – Funding approved by Council Resolution for strategic priorities or through the annual budget process.
- **Special Charge Scheme** – Where the community that directly benefits from the upgrade contributes to the cost of works. Under this scheme, Council will only fund the portion of the project that relates to broader community benefit, calculated using an industry-accepted formula. Benefiting property owners will be charged for their share of the upgrade cost in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1989 and 2020.
- If a community co-contribution is available for sealing an eligible gravel road, that project will receive a higher priority for Council funding.

DEFINITIONS

Terms presented in ***bold italics*** in this policy represent terms used across multiple Council policies and their definitions are detailed in the “*Council Policy Terms and Definitions*” document located on Council’s website www.colacotway.vic.gov.au.

Unsealed Road: Road without bituminous surface

Narrow Sealed Road: A sealed road with a width less than 6.2 m

AADT: Annual Average Daily Traffic

Road Hierarchy: A system for categorizing roads based in their functional roles and capabilities.

Lifecycle Cost: Total cost of constructing, maintaining, renewing, and disposing of an ***asset***.

RELATED DOCUMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Related Documents

1. Asset Plan
2. Road Asset Management Plan
3. Long Term Financial Plan
4. Road Upgrade Prioritization Procedure

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REFERENCES

- Asset Plan 2025-2035– **Council Website**
- Financial Plan 2025-2035– **Council Website**
- Road Management Plan 2025 – 2029 – **Council Website**
- Road Asset Management Plan 2025 – 2029 - **Council Website**
- Local Government Act 1989
- Local Government Act 2000
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Road Management Act 2004
- Colac Community Vision 2050

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Document History	Approved by	Date
Draft for Public Exhibition		Council	24 April 2026

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