

Proposed Great Southern Rail Trail Highway Crossing in Leongatha

Council is aware of community concerns regarding the proposed Great Southern Rail Trail crossing over the South Gippsland Highway in Leongatha and is working on both short and long-term solutions.

In most situations when a rail trail and a road intersect at the same elevation, installing a crossing is relatively straight forward. In the Leongatha location however, it is problematic due to high traffic volumes and short sight distances.

Council has been investigating options for this crossing with specialist consultants and has had discussions with Regional Roads Victoria. A detailed options analysis was undertaken that determined the only feasible short-term option was using the nearby existing footpath network.

To improve the existing footpaths and to better cater for all Great Southern Rail Trail users, Council has obtained approval to construct a new crossing point – with a centre refuge island – near the Leongatha Police Station. Whilst Council acknowledges the proposed route is somewhat inconvenient, it is the safest and most practical short term option.

Council's preferred long-term solution is to use a signalised crossing at the Roughead/Long/Hughes Street intersection when Stage 2 of the Leongatha Alternate Route along Hughes Street is developed. Council has been advocating for this project with Regional Roads Victoria and has recently adopted the route as a priority project for 2021/22.

Construction of Stage 2 of the Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternate Route has many community benefits and would result in a safe and convenient crossing for rail trail users.

Other short-term arrangements for the crossing were considered including an underpass arrangement but these have not progressed due to the expected high construction costs - relative to the cost of the rest of the rail trail and footpath network – and the disruption that would be caused to freight and other road users during construction. Technical issues such as accessibility, safety barriers and drainage issues were also considered as well as potential public safety and vandalism concerns. It was not deemed prudent for Council resources to be committed further into investigating this arrangement in light of the significant costs and

limitations.

Quote attributable to South Gippsland Shire Council CEO, Kerryn Ellis:

“We understand and acknowledge our community’s concerns in relation to the proposed Great Southern Rail Trail highway crossing in Leongatha. Our short and long-term approaches were only developed after careful consideration of all possible options and alternatives. Although the short-term solution is not perfect, it is the most logical way forward considering Stage 2 of the Leongatha Alternative Route is planned for and is included as a priority project of Council.”