

## **PARKING MANAGEMENT**

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Report Author:           Manager Strategy and Transformation  
Responsible Officer:    Director Built Environment & Infrastructure  
Ward(s) affected:       (All Wards);

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

## **SUMMARY**

Over recent years, Council has been reviewing parking and transport across the municipality as part of delivering committed actions under Council's Integrated Transport Strategy 2020 – 2040.

Our community has also told us their concerns about congestion and the availability and safety of parking, particularly in our tourist locations during the summer months.

At the start of 2024, Council increased enforcement in major tourist areas to address these concerns. This included using number plate recognition technology, along with physically chalking vehicles.

Tourism is expected to double over the next 10 years. This means we need a clear approach to support our popular townships with this increase.

Currently, all Council owned car parks are free across Yarra Ranges, so visitors use the assets and facilities that ratepayers predominantly fund.

An assessment of parking utilisation in key tourism areas, coupled with community feedback, increased tourism and availability of Council land, has identified Warburton as presenting the strongest opportunity to address traffic congestion and parking issues.

It is proposed to pilot real-time parking information technology alongside a paid parking program for a period of up to 12 months to enhance the existing enforcement effort at Warburton. These actions are consistent with of Council's Integrated Transport Strategy 2020-2040 Implementation Plan.

Yarra Ranges residents would be exempt from parking fees.

The pilot program is expected to benefit the community by:

- Improving traffic flow, parking accessibility and safe parking behaviours
- Supporting local businesses with vehicle turnaround and patronage
- Providing clarity on the number of parking spaces available within the town
- Contributing funds to local Council assets

Paid parking would be for visitors (non-residents) only. A permit process would exempt all Yarra Ranges residents from paying to park within the municipality. Details around the permit process are yet to be finalised. This will be communicated to the community in advance of installation. Parking restrictions and enforcement will still apply to all users.

Future expansion of the pilot across other tourism hotspots would be subject to an evaluation process by Council that would consider operational performance, end to end system performance (including resident permit system), community and local business feedback and the endorsed Parking Management Framework.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### ***That Council***

- 1. Note the traffic and parking congestion challenges across the municipality, in particular areas with high tourism visitation.***
- 2. Note increased parking enforcement across the municipality as a key step to improve parking congestion and deter inappropriate, unsafe or illegal parking.***
- 3. Continue to improve parking outcomes through commencement of a pilot program for up to twelve months, which implements real-time parking information displays, in conjunction with paid parking for non-residents, consistent with the Yarra Ranges Council Integrated Transport Strategy 2020-2040.***
- 4. Commence the pilot program in the township of Warburton in 2024.***
- 5. Invest revenue from parking fees into the local community.***
- 6. Evaluate the pilot program, incorporating community and local business feedback and completion of Council's Parking Management Framework, prior to any decision by Council to expand the program, and***
- 7. Continue to investigate parking infrastructure opportunities with State departments and authorities in areas of high tourism visitation.***

## RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

There are no related Council decisions relevant to this item.

## DISCUSSION

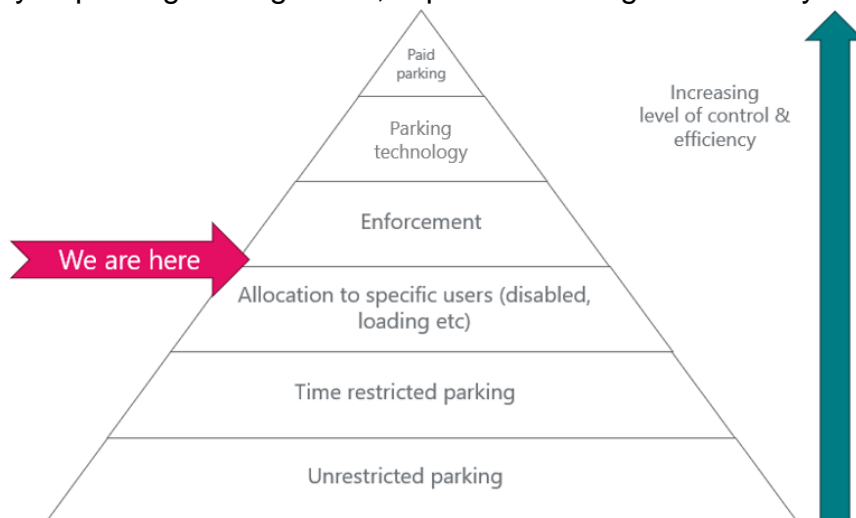
### *Purpose and Background*

The Yarra Ranges is one of the most visited and iconic tourist regions in Victoria – and Australia. As the population of Victoria increases the expected growth of visitation to our municipality is also predicted to grow from 4.5 million to just over 9 million visitors over the next 10 years. Tourism is critical to the economy of our region and the state, but also creates a burden for local residents and a balance between the parking accessibility needs of residents and visitors to the region is sought.

This challenge and the need to address it, is recognised in Yarra Ranges Council's Integrated Transport Strategy 2020-2040 which can be accessed here: [Integrated Transport Strategy 2020-2040 \(2\).pdf](#)

### **Parking Improvement Hierarchy & Management Framework**

The hierarchy of parking management, is presented diagrammatically below:



Moving upwards through each phase introduces a new level of parking control and efficiency.

The majority of our municipality already includes some unrestricted, time restricted and specific user restricted parking. For many towns, existing parking management tools meet current traffic demand and do not require changes. However, some of our highly visited areas are struggling to cope with visitation, and as a result parking availability, access and associated safety and amenity issues.

To create a consistent response to parking management, Council is developing a Draft Parking Management Framework. This document will provide high level

guidance in responding to parking challenges in a consistent manner across the municipality in line with community views, and is anticipated to cover parking allocation, availability, pricing, and permit management.

Example of parking management policies and frameworks in place in other LGAs are provided in the links below.

- Port Phillip: [Parking-Management-Policy-2020 \(portphillip.vic.gov.au\)](https://portphillip.vic.gov.au/Parking-Management-Policy-2020)
- Banyule: [On-street-parking-management-framework.pdf](#)

Community engagement on this framework is proposed to take place later in the second half of 2024.

### **Parking Investigation**

Carpark utilisation data has been collected at several high visitation tourist destinations across the Shire to determine where congestion and safety could be improved through further application of the parking improvement hierarchy.

Utilisation data was examined alongside aspects such as diversity of parking users, suitability for parking technology, parking related enquiries/feedback and planned infrastructure changes.

Warburton was identified as presenting the strongest opportunity to improve congestion and safety issues related to parking.

Over the last 12 months, residents have submitted 98 requests to Council regarding parking issues in Warburton including safety, accessibility, and amenity impacts. In the same period 26 requests were submitted asking for changes to resolve traffic related issues in Warburton. Council has also received 369 comments on parking and vehicle movements through community engagement on Warburton UDF development. These comments seek solutions to peak hours traffic and parking congestion issues.

Site investigation and parking surveys during weekends in Warburton to analyse traffic and parking patterns found that:

- Parking occupancy on Thomas Avenue between 7am and 4pm exceeds 90%, with typically only 0 to 2 spaces available. Motorists unable to find a space, have to turn around at the end of Thomas Avenue to return to Warburton Hwy, which can take over 6 minutes during peak periods.
- The parking area off Station Road showed an average occupancy of 44% (17 spaces available) throughout the day, with peak occupation reaching 82% (7 spaces available). There is a lack of information available to visitors regarding parking options at Station Street.
- Water World Car Park experiences 90-100% utilisation (0-1 space available) between 9am and 5pm from November to April, leading to significant congestion within the car park and queuing.

- The Warburton Recreation Reserve shows significant underutilisation of parking spaces, with between 30 to 74 spaces available during the period between 10am and 3pm.

Peak occupancy parking patterns contributes to significant safety and amenity hazards to both residents and visitors.

### **Parking Technology and Visitor Paid Parking**

The assessment at Warburton identified that based on current data, 'real-time' parking information and communication can significantly improve traffic congestion and parking access. The technology to achieve this can include a combination of sensors, cameras, and signage, commonly in place across Melbourne. By navigating commuters towards available parking spots, warn them of car park availability early in their journey and as a result "steer" them away from parking in residential areas. Examples of typical arrangements likely suitable for Warburton are provided in Attachment 1.

As an example of potential application, a wayfinding sign upon entrance to Warburton could indicate a number and locations of car parking areas near the town centre as well as indicating further parking beyond. Thomas Avenue, Station Street car parks and Water World could all have Variable Message Sign (VMS) double sided boards showing live data on number of available car bays, fed by parking sensor input. Entrance to Warburton Water world could also have a double-sided camera identifying the number of available parking bays.

Currently Council spends over \$100,000 annually to manage traffic in Warburton during peak season, and it is expected investment in this technology would substantially reduce this cost.

In addition to real time parking information displays, introducing a fee for parking for non-residents on weekends would also act to address capacity and safety issues as a result of tourism visitation during peak times.

Currently, parking at all tourist destinations within Yarra Ranges is free of charge, with maintenance costs predominantly subsidised by rates collected from residents. Paid parking offers a 'user pays' mechanism for visitors to contribute financially to the maintenance of infrastructure and associated services.

The benefits of paid parking include:

*Parking Availability:* Paid parking can help manage parking demand by incentivising higher turnover of spaces which increases availability, especially in high-traffic areas. This can reduce congestion and improve traffic flow.

*Reduced "cruising" for parking:* When parking is limited, drivers often spend time circling the block looking for a spot, leading to increased traffic and emissions.

*Improved equity:* Paid parking can help distribute the parking availability and access opportunity.

*Revenue generation:* Paid parking can generate revenue to share the burden of visitation more equitably between residents and visitors.

*Increased patronage for local businesses:* Paid parking can encourage drivers to park for shorter durations, freeing up spaces more frequently.

The Warburton UDF, approved by Council in March 2024, proposes to increase parking by approximately 228 car parks which is a growth of 73%. As the guiding document for Warburton Township, the UDF presents a vision that will be delivered over time. To address immediate needs, paid parking is proposed as an option to address current issues, with opportunities to invest revenue into other projects within Warburton Township.

Best practice paid parking solutions prioritise seamless customer experience. Any solution therefore needs to consider the nature of the visitation and reliability of the telecommunications network. Examples of potential parking meter infrastructure for Warburton is included in Attachment 1.

No personal data would be collected or stored by Council.

The proposed next step would be to go to tender for an appropriate provider. The final installed arrangement would be subject to the outcomes of that tender process.

### ***Yarra Ranges Residents Exemption Permits***

It is proposed that parking fees will only apply to visitors to the Yarra Ranges Municipality; residents would be exempt through a permit system. (Residents would still be required to adhere to any parking time restrictions).

It is proposed to issue digital permits per vehicle number plate with 3 free parking permits offered per household. It is anticipated there would be online and in-person options to apply for permits.

The permit system would form part of the tender request, including specialist advice on its administration and management. The system would then be finalised in the second half of 2024.

Community engagement would take place including with local businesses of Warburton through the draft Parking Management Framework to determine the way forward for businesses impacted by the changes in parking.

### ***Options Considered***

Council's options align with the parking improvement hierarchy:

***Option 1: Augment parking enforcement with real time parking information displays***

***Option 2: Augment parking enforcement with real time parking information displays and paid parking***

***Option 3: Continue with parking enforcement only and reassess additional parking management controls at a later date***

### ***Recommended option justification***

Option 1 is anticipated to improve traffic and parking through the installation of 'real time' parking information and communication technology. Through this option, commuters will:

- be made aware of parking areas early in their trip
- see numbers of available parking bays before they turn into the car park (navigate traffic away from congested areas)
- be infringed for illegal parking during parking patrols

As a result, it is expected traffic to improve, and utilisation of our parking areas to be more effective.

However, this option does not achieve the greatest level of parking and traffic congestion improvement, as there is no additional incentive to turnover parking spaces. A parking fee (Option 2) achieves this. Paid parking provides better results for parking and traffic management on days when parking capacity is close to 100%.

Paid parking also generates the additional benefit of creating revenue for the township required to keep up with increased asset utilisation by visitors.

Option 3 does not address the current and significant traffic congestion, parking safety and amenity problems currently experienced by high visitation in Warburton.

Option 2 is therefore recommended (the introduction of parking technology and paid parking concurrently). As part of this, it is recommended a pilot program of up to twelve months occur, with parking fee exemption for non-residents. The pilot would inform the completion of a Parking Management Framework.

There would be flexibility to adjust parking controls throughout the duration of the pilot if deemed necessary, taking into consideration the parking utilisation within the area.

The next steps with this option, over the course of 2024 would be:

- commencement of a tender process for an integrated parking solution (installation of equipment, digital parking fee and permit management system)
- targeted engagement with local businesses
- broad community engagement on a draft Parking Management Framework
- equipment installation and system set-up
- implementation of a resident (parking fee exemption) permit system

## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

Cost estimates for the implementation of Option 2 are in the range of \$400,000 to \$500,000. This expense will include all the parking equipment, installation, and configuration as well as the permit management system. The exact cost will be determined when the public tender process is completed, and a contract is awarded.

On-going costs to servicing such equipment and complete repairs is estimated at \$25,000 per year, with likely annual indexation.

It is also estimated that the approximate revenue from paid parking will be \$250,000 per year. This calculation is based on, including:

- parking study data (average occupancy data per car park)
- an assumed hourly fee between \$4 and \$6, noting that the fee for parking will be developed in the second half of the year, incorporating benchmarking, consultation and parking management objectives
  - Paid parking for visitors only activated during weekends
  - 70% of all parking users are visitors and will require to pay for parking.
  - 30% of parking users are Yarra Ranges residents and therefore excluded from paying

Council may also choose to activate paid parking during public holidays and use dynamic parking fees for visitors to better manage the traffic and parking during particularly busy days.

Anticipated improvement in traffic congestion through parking information displays would also reduce Council's operating expenditure on traffic management in Warburton during peak season (approximately \$100,00).

Revenue from parking fees is proposed to be directed to the local community.

## **RELEVANT LAW**

*Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) to find provisions related to a council's authority to introduce a paid parking system.

Section 9 of the Act outlines the overarching governance principles that councils must give effect to, including:

- (c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;
- (g) the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;

These principles suggest that a paid parking system could potentially be introduced as a means to promote sustainable transport options, manage congestion and its environmental impacts, as well as provide a revenue stream to ensure the council's financial viability.



## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Economic Implications***

The introduction of paid parking may have following economic implications:

- **Parking Turnover:** Paid parking encourages higher turnover of parking spaces, as drivers are incentivised to park for shorter durations to avoid higher fees. This can benefit local businesses by increasing the availability of parking for customers.
- **Revenue Generation:** Paid parking generates revenue that can be directed toward local asset maintenance, projects, and community initiatives.

### ***Social Implications***

The introduction of paid parking may have following social implications:

- **Affordability:** Paid parking can impact low-income individuals who may have fewer transportation alternatives or less ability to pay for parking. This can raise concerns about equitable access to public spaces and services.
- **Alternative Transportation:** If implemented effectively, paid parking can encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation, such as public transit, cycling, or walking, which can have positive social impacts in terms of increased physical activity and community interaction.

### ***Environmental Implications***

Wayfinding signs can help reduce emissions in a few different ways:

- **Reducing congestion and idling time:** Clear wayfinding signage helps drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians navigate more efficiently to their destinations. This reduces the amount of time vehicles spend idling in traffic or circling.
- **Encouraging walking/biking:** Good wayfinding makes it easier for people to navigate areas on foot or by bicycle rather than driving.
- **Optimizing traffic flow:** Effective wayfinding signage can optimize traffic patterns and reduce vehicle emissions.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

It is important to acknowledge that through Community engagement activities completed for the Warburton Urban Design Framework, Council has a good understanding of the community's stand on traffic and parking issues. Engagement activities are planned to take place with local businesses to finalise the paid parking approach around the Warburton commercial precinct if endorsed. Council will also engage with the wider community on the draft Parking Management Framework.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

There has been a lot of benchmarking activities in regard to smart technology and paid parking conducted for this project. Parking permit policies from more than 20 councils were reviewed. Close work with Mornington Peninsula Shire highlighted opportunities as well as lessons learnt. Research conducted with technology providers also highlighted innovative solutions that are currently under review for the chosen car parks.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The risk of the recommendation needs to be weighed against the current traffic congestion, safety, and amenity risks.

There is an identified need in Warburton for parking improvement, demonstrated by traffic observations, parking utilisation data and resident feedback.

The development of a limited and time-bound pilot program, alongside proposed engagement on the draft Parking Framework, and a transparent evaluation process has been designed as mechanism to mitigate risks associated with introducing a change to the current parking information, fees and permit arrangements.

In addition, the recommendation does not rely on unproven or new equipment, technology, or systems; providers currently exist in the market with products and systems commonly in place elsewhere.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## **ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT**

1. Examples of Parking Management Technology