

Birchip Safer Cumming Avenue - Frequently Asked Questions

What is the goal of the project?

The initial aim of this project was to improve the safety of Cumming Avenue, particularly around the lack of reversing lane and the many accidents and near misses that have occurred with turning cars in front of the Supermarket and Bakery.

Through receiving additional funding, we have been able to address some of the other key issues, including replacing the footpaths so that the town is more accessible for all, drainage hotspots at the supermarket and greening and beautifying the area.

When is the project likely to happen?

The project is set to start in mid-October, and it is expected take six months to complete.

What are the likely disruptions? What am I likely to see?

Given the scope of works now includes footpaths, kerb and channel and effectively goes from shopfront to shopfront, there will be disruptions. This will include footpaths, car parks and traffic lanes closed at varying times.

The contractors are currently developing their program and we will work to have regular communication available to the community (for instance, when footpaths or traffic lanes will be temporarily closed). We will also communicate the alternative arrangements that will be put in place to ensure essential shops and services can be accessed.

It is critical that our contractors and project managers will work closely with businesses to ensure there is access to shops and residences along Cumming Avenue.

Unfortunately, we do expect there will be some short-term pain, for long-term gain and we do ask the community to have some patience and continue to work with Council and Birchip Community Forum to see this transformational project become a reality.

Are there likely to be detours?

We will be liaising with the contractor and Regional Roads Victoria to ensure that detours are kept to a minimum to ensure that local businesses don't miss out on tourism and passing traffic trade. Detours for heavy trucks during harvest may be considered, pending the programming work of the contractor.

How will Council and the Birchip Community Forum work with the businesses to support them during disruption?

Traders and residences along Cumming Avenue will have a fortnightly newsletter highlighting the upcoming works of the project and the potential disruptions. The businesses have all been sent a letter from Council's Project Manager, Brad Smith, and have direct access to him. Brad works out of the Birchip Office so will effectively be on-site daily to address issues.

Who is the contractor?

Millers Civil Contractors from Horsham have been awarded the civil works contract. Council is still doing some minor refinements of the greening/landscaping designs and will go to tender for those works over the coming months.

Who in the community is working with Council on this project?

Council has set up a Project Control Group with Brad Smith as the project manager and are joining with the responsible contractors and representative community groups to deliver the project. This group will meet fortnightly to discuss the project and provide any necessary information or updates

to the community. The Project Control Group currently includes Birchip Community Forum members Brendan Beasley (Chair), John Richmond, Carly Sharp, Josh Richmond and Brian Lea. This group is expected to grow to reflect the changing dynamics of the project and will be a key linkage between all stakeholders and the community. They are happy to discuss any aspects of the project with community members.

Will car parks be lost in this project?

To ensure that shops, the median and both sides of the road are easily accessible to wheelchairs, gophers and strollers, the project includes alfresco areas and kerb outstands, which will see a slight reduction in the number of parks. Through this project we have worked to maximise car parking for the length of Cumming Avenue and have been able to reinstate car parks, where there were previously no parking zones.

The plans of the project are available to review on Council's website and at the shop window between Wimmera Mallee Accounting and the Birchip Newsagency. Many thanks to Bernadette Hogan for allowing us to use her shop to display and communicate plans and ideas.

What will happen with historical items, such as the clock and time capsule, currently in the median strip?

The clock and time capsule are important historical elements of the township. The Project Control Group, along with Council will be aiming to look at where the clock could be re-housed and will work with relevant community groups to ensure it remains on display somewhere in Birchip. It is proposed that the time capsule will be retained in its current location.

Does this include the street art project, Mali Heart?

Council, through the hard work and research of the Birchip Community Forum, has applied for a Creative Victoria grant that will see up to eleven murals painted on walls throughout the town. It also includes Augmented Reality on the Mallee Bull and if successful, will drive tourism and add to the Silo Art Trail across the Wimmera Mallee region.

This project, if funded, will complement the streetscape works and be a really fantastic boost for the town.

NB: There are no current funding applications in for the silo art proposal; however Council and the Birchip Community Forum are still working with Graincorp on getting their approval and support, prior to seeking funding for this project.

What about the idea of the roundabout at the five-ways intersection?

Whilst this isn't funded under the current project, Council and the Birchip Community Forum are still lobbying for the funding and have had recent meetings with local MPs about the project. A very high-level estimate for the roundabout is \$3-4million, and therefore it will require state or federal funding.

Where do I find more information?

Birchip Community Forum has secured a shopfront between Wimmera Mallee Accounting and the Birchip Newsagency, where the plans will be displayed as well as regular updates on the project, particularly focussing on pedestrian and traffic management issues.

Council has also set up a dedicated page on its website, which will be kept up-to-date at: <https://www.buloke.vic.gov.au/birchip-safer-cumming-avenue-streetscape-works>

In addition, Council and the Birchip Community Forum will regularly post updates on our social media pages and regular updates will also be placed in the local newspapers.