

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **GAWLER EAST LINK ROAD ALIGNMENT**

Council held a Special Council Meeting last night to consider information recently provided by the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) regarding the Gawler East Link Road (GELR), contract procurement, project delivery and related legal advice. The DPTI has informed Council that it cannot deliver the GELR within the \$55m budget if Council pursues its preferred Eckerman Avenue alignment.

"The primary reason for Council choosing the Eckerman Avenue alignment was to enable the future strategic connection of the GELR to Tiver Road," said Mayor Redman. "The information provided by the DPTI that the Eckerman Avenue alignment cannot be delivered within budget was a shock to Council and needed serious consideration."

The DPTI's preferred alignment stands to significantly change the character of Potts Road from a local road to a major collector road once Gawler East is full developed. It's estimated that 13,500 vehicles will use Potts Road under the DPTI alignment, however only 7,400 would use Potts Road if the GELR was eventually connected to Tiver Road.

Both the DPTI's preferred alignment and the Eckerman Avenue alignment require private land acquisition. The DPTI has recently engaged its Property division to ascertain the cost of land acquisition for all potential GELR alignments. The DPTI's Property division assessed the cost of land acquisition at a significantly higher rate than what had been reported to Council previously. The DPTI has also advised Council that it will not proceed with the procurement of the GELR project until such time as it has confidence that the land necessary for the road to be constructed can be acquired. This new information of significant increased cost was a shock to Elected Members.

In 2016, the Eckerman Avenue alignment was estimated to cost \$54.9m (including land acquisition) which was within the \$55m budget provided for the GELR by the State Government. Since then, significant design refinement has occurred and project costs have

been revised and updated. As a result the DPTI has advised Council that the Eckerman Avenue alignment is now estimated to cost approximately \$10m over the allocated budget.

“Vital information regarding the viability of delivering this road has only just been presented to Council,” said Mayor Redman. “This new information effectively meant that if we were to continue to support the Eckermann alignment this would mean significant time, cost and risk for the project. It’s disappointing that such important information was not made available during Council’s initial discussions regarding the Link Road. Having the full picture regarding the project’s costs and associated risks would have added to the debate regarding preferred alignments and provided Council with all the information we needed to make the appropriate alignment decision on behalf of our community.”

The State Government’s Cabinet met on Friday 1 December 2017 to discuss the GELR and potential risks associated with its delivery. Mayor Redman was contacted later that afternoon by a staff member from the Ministers office and advised that if Council did not choose to endorse the DPTI’s preferred alignment then the \$55m State Government commitment would be withdrawn.

“It’s unfortunate that it came to this,” said Mayor Redman. “Until last Friday, discussions with the DPTI had been constructive and informative. Cabinet’s mandate to remove the funding for the Link Road unless Council falls into line has changed this dynamic, politicising the matter. Council’s focus has always been delivering the best outcome for our community. The future strategic link to Tiver Road made the Eckerman Avenue alignment the best outcome for our community, hence Council’s original decision to pursue this alignment.”

Mayor Redman continued, “It is now clear that if Council wanted to facilitate the construction of the Link Road that will see both investment and jobs created in Gawler, it needed to reevaluate its position. Council held a Special Meeting yesterday to consider its options and decided to agree to the DPTI alignment.”

Unfortunately accepting the DPTI alignment significantly diminishes the feasibility of a future Tiver Road extension which was a key fundamental outcome for Council in negotiations on the GELR with the State Government.

“Losing the potential connection to Tiver Road that the Eckerman Avenue alignment provided is extremely disappointing,” Mayor Redman said. “Council has worked hard to ensure we get the best possible outcome for our community from the Link Road. It is clear the State Government is not willing to pay the extra money to deliver Council’s preferred alignment despite Council agreeing to a value engineered road with significant compromises regarding deferred infrastructure and final alignment in an effort to keep the budget under control and also realise a long term strategic outcome for the people of Gawler.”

Mayor Redman continued, “As a medium size Council we don’t have the financial resources to find the extra money needed to realise our preferred alignment. Council therefore had to make a tough decision to safeguard investment and jobs for our region. It was the only decision given the very real threat of withdrawal of much needed money for our community. Here in the north we are hurting as a result of the wholesale demise of the car manufacturing industry so it is so disappointing that the State Government couldn’t find the

extra money which is a small amount for them but just too big for our Council and ratepayers to afford.”

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