

ASHBURTON DISTRICT — NOTES ON THE ROADING NETWORK.

Ashburton District roading network at 2,625 km is the third largest network after Southland District (4,956 km) and Clutha District (2946 km). These lengths do not include the state highways. In Ashburton District there are two state highways, SH 1 from Rakaia to Ealing and SH 77 from Ashburton to Rakaia Gorge. State highways are maintained and operated by Transit NZ, but there are numerous interface areas between the local roads and the state highways, especially through the urban areas.

The Ashburton network is made up of 149 km urban and 1,301 km rural sealed roads and the total length of sealed roads represents just over 55% of the total network.

Roading, or transportation as it is more generally becoming known as, is the single largest activity that Council is currently responsible for, and is a vital transport and communication network for the economic vitality and development in the district. For the 2008/09 budget, the Council plans to spend on the transportation network as follows

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| 1. Roothing maintenance and operation | |
| | \$3,160,500 |
| 2. Renewal work (reseals, overlays, and other asset replacements) | |
| | \$5,357,900 |
| 3. New capital work (new kerb and channels, new roads, seal extension) | |
| | \$2,013,500 |
| Total | \$10,551,900 |

To fund this work Council receives revenue from a number of areas such as petroleum tax, grants, developer contributions, but the largest share of the cost is covered by rates (4,598,500) and Land Transport NZ subsidies (4,654,600). These two funding sources provide 88 % of the total funding required.

Work planned for 2008/09 is as follows

- 122 km of sealed road resurfacing

- 13 km unsealed road rehabilitation

- 1 km of kerb and channel replacement, and new kerb and channel

- One bridge replacement

- Seal widening on Bremner Rd and Company Rd

- Intersection upgrades at Works Rd/SH 1 and Northpark Rd, SH 1

- Upgrade of a number of minor of minor intersections throughout the district

- Street light upgrading and new street lighting with power undergrounding.

As a share of total rates raised, the roading share is 22 %. The movement in rates for roading from 2007/08 to 2008/09 is less than 1%.

The subsidy provided by Land Transport NZ to assist in operating and maintaining district roads is based on a base funding assistance rate (FAR) of 47%, and is applicable to 85% of the roading activity either at the base rate for maintenance and renewal work, or base plus 10% of the new capital work. Not all planned work is eligible for subsidy, especially new work which has to achieve financial benefits 3 to 4 times the projected cost to receive subsidy. This requires Council to carry out some works without Land Transport subsidy. The FAR applicable to Ashburton district is based on a formula that uses the annual total subsidisable work cost divided by the total equitable land value of the district. This is the same for all districts in New Zealand and the formulae is adjusted to let LTNZ subsidy meet 50% of all TLA subsidisable roading work in the Country.

We have a major problem with this formula as the Ashburton District land valuation is increasing significantly due to land use changes such as conversion to dairy farming, and this has a detrimental affect on our FAR. Currently we have been advised by Land Transport that the Ashburton FAR calculates at 46%, but have agreed to hold at 47% for 2008/09, but will be the applicable rate for 2009/10. The adjustment of FAR by 1 % downward represents an additional \$100,000 of rate funding required. At 46%, our FAR is on 3 points above the minimum rate of 43% applicable, which is the rate applicable to major cities which have a much larger rating base that does Ashburton District. Obviously the method by which the FAR is calculated is a major concern to the Council.

There are a number of issues facing Ashburton District roads besides the financial issues

1. Increasing traffic numbers and traffic loadings: In spite of fuel cost increases, traffic volumes are still increasing, and there is little relief in site as there are virtually no alternatives to travel by cars or other motorised vehicles due to the nature of our district. While there might be some action from motorists to try to reduce the number of trips, the overall effect will only be small. In addition, there is increasing growth in Heavy Commercial vehicles, especially milk tanker truck and trailer units. Whereas in the past we only had a few HCV's each week on our roads, and these trucks were not fully laden, we now have roads with up to 3 or more milk tankers every day, and on some of our main roads up to 12 per day, and these tankers when fully laden are up to the 44 tonne legal limit. The result of this is increasing wear and tear on our roads which will have the effect of reducing their effective life. The District will need to plan for rural and urban overlays on a lot of our roads and this work will be expensive. This damage is already clearly evident where milk tankers operate on unsealed roads and the

Council has spent in excess of \$4 million in the last 6 years upgrading unsealed roads, and has an ongoing programme for this work over the next 10 years. We are also seeing failures occurring in some of our sealed roads due to this heavy traffic increase.

2. Increased traffic causing congestion: Some areas of Ashburton Rakaia and Hinds are now suffering from congestion and access delays. These areas are West St and East St at Walnut Ave, the Ashburton river bridge and the need to plan for a second bridge, Tinwald residents' access to SH 1, South St/SH 1 intersection, traffic speeds and safety in Rakaia and Hinds.
3. Maintaining existing carriageways: The heavy traffic growth in numbers and weight is starting to show up in the smoothness of our rural sealed roads. Many of the rural roads were not designed to carry the weight of traffic they are now subject to, and shape distortion in such areas as wheel tracks etc is becoming more evident. The localised rebuilding of roads (patching work) required prior to resealing is increasing, and this is expected to continue at an increasing cost.
4. Sign and road furniture vandalism and damage: The level of vandalism on signs and other road furniture continues at a high rate showing no abatement. In addition to this there are a lot of signs damaged as a result of crashes, mainly due to poor driving. The loss of availability of these signs is a real inconvenience to road users, and is expensive. In 2006/07 Council spent in excess of \$130,000 in sign repairs and reinstatement. While we can recover some of the cost if the person responsible is caught, very few of these vandals are ever reported.
5. Land Transport compliance requirements: In order to receive Land Transport subsidy, the Council is contracted to meet a schedule of standards relating to road user satisfaction, safety and asset preservation. These have key performance measures that have to be reported on annually.

6. Road Safety: Road safety and driver behaviour is a key issue in the district. There have been 5 deaths on local roads this year and a similar number on the state highway. In addition there have been a large number of accident and non accident intersection crashes. A lot of these arise from poor driver performance, and we have a full programme of road safety projects and community activities we carry out each year to try to reduce the number of road crashes, and to make our roads a safer place. This is directed at all roads users which include cyclists and pedestrians.

7. Contracting resources: The District is continuing to grow at a rapid pace, and many of the local contractors carry out work for the private sector as well as Council. This means that Council construction activities compete with the private sector for these contracting resources, so the price to carry out our work gets pushed up by this other demand.

8. Customer levels of service: The levels of services demanded by our customers (ratepayers and road users) continues to rise. This puts a serious burden on both budgets and resources. However in order to manage this growth in demand, Council has put in place a customer request management system which allows staff to determine where best resources can be utilised to meet the needs of the public. The public surveys carried out have indicated that the service levels being provided do meet a reasonable level of satisfaction.

There has been a continual review of transportation needs throughout the Country by the Government in recent years, and the process continues on. The effect of changes on Ashburton District arising from the amalgamation of Transit NZ and Land Transport NZ into the New Zealand Transportation agency from 1 July 08 has yet to be fully determined, but is just a further national change being inflicted in Local Government management. It will no doubt have a number of effects (both good and bad) on Council's performance as a transportation network manager, and we will have to commission the

required resources to try and produce the best outcome for our clients.

However it is pleasing to receive the news today that Central Government has approved additional funding of \$33.5M over the next four years, part of a total of \$244M over the next ten years, to invest in transport infrastructure upgrade and development. There has been a lot of work put into the development of this funding package, and a number of the projects included will be carried out on state highways and local roads in Ashburton District.