

Workgroup developing Guidelines for funding accelerated pavement consumption from unplanned heavy vehicle traffic on low volume roads

Meeting notes: 4:30 Thursday 7 May 2015, Brentwood Hotel, Wellington

Present;

- Jamie Cox - Wairoa DC convenor (from 5:20)
- Warren Furner - Ruapehu DC
- Andrea Nicoll – Ruapehu DC
- Steve Murrin - Malborough Roads
- Murray Gimblett - NZTA P&I
- Martin Taylor – Whakatane DC
- Jeff Devine – Whangarei DC (from 5:45)
- Murray Hasler – Gore DC (from 5:00)
- Wayne Newman – RCAF RGG secretary

Apologies : Gary McGraw -Far North DC, Joe Bourque -Southland DC, Rui Leitao -Wanganui DC, Wayne Furlong -Waikato DC, Henry van Zyl –Kaipara DC, Vincent Lim –South Taranaki DC, Jamie McPherson –Tasman DC.

Summary

Members reviewed the draft structure for the guidelines that had been circulated.

The structure needs to provide a Problem statement , vision and purpose as well as evidence-based examples to suit a business-case model.

Before taking the development of draft guidelines further, however, the working group needs to invite affected parties to become involved in the process.

Because the subject has many different streams of work, it was agreed that sub-groups be formed that are allocated work-streams e.g. Business case for increased NZTA funding , land use – HCV relationship.

Because the subject covers a wide scope, it was also agreed that the guidelines could be released in a sequence of papers which will flesh out comments.

Actions

- Form a stakeholders group to become involved in the working group.
- Contact Forest Owners Association and Federated Farmers as initial interested parties.
- Agree on work streams.
- Develop a sequence of guidelines release.

Discussion

Warren Furner reported the effect of farm forest blocks was highlighted by the FOA submission on the Ruapehu District proposed rate differential, suggesting that the cumulative effect of these is equal to commercial forestry now. Warren and Steve Murrin both reported difficulties with having an MOU with overseas owners of forests. Steve noted that even where the ownership is local, as in investments by local authorities in forestry, there is limited interest in putting returns from these into roads.

Murray Gimblett noted the need for an evidence-based approach to all aspects of this issue. Consumption of pavement is built into RUC, but assumptions about consumption rates and design life are being questioned increasingly in overseas reviews. Significant differences between theoretical and practical performance are being presented.

There have also been significant failures in forecasting forestry traffic. In Northland 90km of roads were rehabilitated under the RDF to carry forestry traffic, but have failed quite quickly, largely because the volume of forest harvest has significantly exceeded the volumes forecast in 2002. Elsewhere, predicted routes for forest harvest have been upgraded and not been used. The sector has developed in such a way that long-term planning has become more difficult as decisions about the ultimate exit port, route and time of harvest are determined off-shore.

What needs to be considered and somehow addressed is that the costs of the growth agenda of central government in the 1990s are now being met from local rates, but local economies are seeing very little of the significant returns that forestry is making to national GDP.

Martin Taylor commented that it is the cyclical nature of forestry that creates many of the problems. While it is possible to charge per tonne of output once harvest commences, it is almost impossible to fund the work that will be required by that harvest beforehand. Until the forest is cut, the land has a nil income and even if a charge could be made, local authorities are specifically prohibited from accumulating funds against future needs by the LGA.

Jamie Cox acknowledged that the object is to deliver guidelines that will provide a toolbox for authorities. They will need to employ the language and style of the business case model in stating the problem, the costs, the proposal and the benefits, and take an evidence-based approach. It is important to get the structure right.

Murray Gimblett suggested that this could be assisted by stating the vision and purpose of the guidelines. As the purpose is inextricably linked to the problem, that would follow, providing the background before the evidence is presented for the impact of unplanned heavy vehicle traffic and the resulting funding gap. From there we need to develop appropriate options for funding and produce sound arguments to support them.

Jamie noted that the guidelines should not focus on forestry and needed to avoid suggesting a linear relationship between heavy vehicle numbers and pavement consumption.

Jeff Devine commented that in defining the problem, which is how to fund local share, it is essentially forestry that is the problem, whether from within the district and contributing too little to fund its local impacts or from outside the district and contributing nothing to fund its local impacts.

Murray Hasler recommended that other stakeholders be brought into the process at an early date to ensure that the national working group had credibility and to develop a consensual approach to the issues and options for resolution. The meeting agreed that the FOA and Federated Farmers should be approached.

Meeting Closed 7 pm