

STAFF REPORT

TO: Chairman and Members, Engineering Services Committee

FROM: Gary Clark, Transportation Manager

DATE: 30 November 2009

REFERENCE: R859

SUBJECT: **FOREST HARVESTING UPDATE – IMPACTS ON OUR ROADING NETWORK**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update the Engineering Services Committee on the likely maintenance implications arising from the use of district roads by logging companies.

PREAMBLE

MWH have prepared a report of the likely maintenance implications arising from the use of district roads by the logging companies when removing trees from the various forestry blocks in our region. The report was prepared in consultation with the forestry owners.

I have reported to Council previously on the issues surrounding the use of some of our district roads for the movement of logs. Most Councillors are also aware this is not a new phenomenon; however there is a need to better manage the damage created by these users. There are other matters relating to safety and dust that also need to be considered.

This report looks at the likely forestry movements up to 2012 for all the forestry blocks with some of the operators able to give us information out to 2017. The information contained in the report will allow us to plan maintenance intervention programmes to ensure the best cost option for these roads.

DISCUSSION

The report goes into great detail of the different areas in the district where the movement of logging trucks is likely to occur over the next three years. As a result of this work there are some roads identified in the report that have not previously had large amounts of heavy traffic loadings and are likely to have insufficient pavement depth to take increased weights.

It is also important to consider the implications of central government looking at increasing higher weight limits for logging trucks with these changes likely to be approved by July 2010. This will have a significant impact on our roads, both in terms of safety, design and maintenance.

Council has already carried out work on roads in the district to address the movement of logs and this has resulted in reduced maintenance costs and favorable comments from the

transport operators. This report along with a maintenance intervention strategy will enable better management of our roading resource and will reduce overall costs.

The costs for improving roads to meet the needs of the forestry industry and other industries that have a high use of heavy vehicles has typically come from the resealing and rehabilitation budgets. However, I also note that the minor improvements budget is also used for this work. The minor improvements budget has a limit of \$250,000 per site and is currently around \$850,000 per annum. This is based on 8% of our total maintenance budget. The minor improvements budget was originally set up to carry out improvement works that don't gain NZTA funding and used to be called the Minor Safety Works programme. As a result of the call on funds for our maintenance tasks we are now using the minor improvements budget which is resulting in less safety and network improvements being carried out. There is a need to redress this matter when the next three-year programme is approved by NZTA in 2012.

Council needs to better address the maintenance and safety issues that exist in the district. Currently the funding streams are drying up and it is planned as part of my transportation role to better meet the needs of both within the current budgets and plan for the future. Accordingly the Forestry Harvesting Update details measures that will allow Engineering Services to better manage the roads. The Executive Summary from the Forestry Harvesting Update is attached to this report for the Committee's consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT this report be received.

Gary Clark
Transportation Manager