Reflections on Low Volume Roads

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Outline of Presentation

- Importance of Low Volume Roads
- Some Looking Back
- Challenges
- Innovation
- Do Competitive Pricing Procedures Help?
- What are the Future Options?
- Conclusions
Importance of Low Volume Roads

• Most of NZ roads could be regarded as low volume
• These low volume roads are an important part of the network
• Serve many iconic tourist sites
• Critical for agriculture, forestry and horticulture
Some Looking Back

- 2\textsuperscript{nd} Low volume roads conference
- Concrete and asphalt roads in some countries
- Level of service – as potholes grow so does the need to buy larger vehicles
- Cutting the grass on cracked concrete roads
- Don’t deliver an engineers level of service
- Agree management strategy with stakeholders
- Don’t be afraid to be honest as to what can be achieved
Some Looking Back (continued)

• Monitor the network
• Did deliver good unsealed roads using stabilisation
• Did develop thin granular overlays
• NZ has achieved a good standard of road throughout the country
Challenges

• Funding from road users and ratepayers
• Limited traffic volumes but a vast array of vehicle types and weights
• High environmental degradation by:
  - aggregate breakdown
  - frost heave
  - water penetration
  - floods, earthquakes etc.
  - inappropriate speed on unsealed roads
• Matching the level of service to road use
Challenges (continued)

- Ability to innovate
- Ability to provide adequate safety within funds available
- Need to consider whole life cost by all players
Innovation

• Sustained growth is mainly about increasing productivity without compromising the future resource use
• Need to ensure research funding is used to achieve an applicable outcome
  - Is current research funding serving researchers or end users?
  - Is there a need for more on job research?
Innovation (continued)

• Must pursue technology for achieving more with less
Do Competitive Pricing Procedures Help?

- Pre 1991 maintenance costs were high especially for State Highways
- The nineties saw considerable improvement in resource utilisation
- In the last few years costs have increased faster than inflation
- Overall there has been efficiency gains
Does CPP Help (continued)

• However the opportunities for applied research has declined
• In the past worked directly with councils to carry out onsite trials
• Can this happen today under CPP?
• Do we need to develop a mechanism that allows some risk taking and not always covering the backside
What are the Future Options

• Is NZ too concerned about capital works at the expense of maintaining what we have?
• Maybe the level of service were too high on some parts of the network?
• Have we forgotten some of the good ideas of the past?
Conclusions

• The road business is resource hungry
• Don’t lose sight of the need to innovate
• Do everything you can to protect the network
• Everyone should be looking for productivity gains
Thankyou