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Public meetings discuss proposed roading rate change

Proposed changes to the Southland District Council's roading rate were discussed in detail at two public meetings in Te Anau on Tuesday night and Invercargill yesterday (Wednesday).

About 22 people attended the two meetings and Council chief executive David Adamson said although the turnout was small at both meetings, there was a good cross-section of interests and a lot of ground was covered.

Morrison Low consultants Malcolm Morrison and Sue Davidson presented the methodology for the model and they and Council staff answered questions.

"Both meetings were very positive. Those at the meetings were able to clarify points and put their point of view across. We hopefully answered their questions and also encouraged everyone to put in submissions to the Council's draft Annual Plan so Council could debate the issues," Mr Adamson said.

"Rating is a blunt tool – there is no right definitive answer but we believe this model better reflects where roading expenditure is being spent and is as fair as possible to all sectors," he said.

Mr Morrison said his company worked with 30 councils throughout New Zealand and Southland had the largest roading network by far, but was innovative in its attempts to make road rating fairer.

Mr Adamson said the model separates roading costs into general and pavement/structural. All sectors then pay general costs and the sectors with heavy vehicles (commercial, dairying, farming, forestry, industrial, mining) pay the pavement/structural costs.

Council is proposing to use the tonnage each sector generates to calculate the portion of structural/pavement costs they should pay.

One of the key aspects of the model is the change to capital value for allocating rating portions within sectors.

"A change such as that proposed is always going to be difficult as it is like slicing a cake differently and therefore creating winners and losers."

Council is also proposing to slightly modify Morrison Low figures to better reflect the pattern of expenditure occurring on the district's roads, both historically and in the future, Mr Adamson said.

The intention is to recalculate the share of costs every three years to take into account the effect of property revaluations, land use change and revised tonnage data.

The proposal is included in Council's draft Annual Plan for consultation. Details on how to make a submission are set out in the draft Plan (available at www.southlanddc.govt.nz, Council Offices and District Libraries) and in the Summary. Submissions should be received by Council by Wednesday, 21 May 2008.

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