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February 25, 2008

Extra funding for gravel road upgrades

Several Southland gravel roads will be upgraded in the next 18 months after the Southland District Council received funding approval for the first \$752,000 of a nearly \$2 million programme.

The remaining \$1.2 million is expected to be approved within the 2008/09 Roding programme presently being considered by Land Transport New Zealand.

Council's Asset Manager Roding Russell Hawkes said the funds will be used to strengthen gravel roads which have heavy log and dairy tanker use.

Funding for the project was approved by the Board of Land Transport New Zealand following a recommendation from the Regional Land Transport Committee to use Regional "R" funding.

The rules for the use of "R" funds were revised after submissions by Council to Transport Minister Annette King last year, Mr Hawkes said.

This will allow Council to upgrade gravel roads in the District without having to increase rates to do so, he said.

"As a result of increased heavy traffic on the gravel road network, present maintenance and gravel road rehabilitation programmes have been at an unsustainably low level, leading to deterioration of the network and an increase in dissatisfaction from Council's ratepayers," Mr Hawkes said.

Work will begin immediately on several of the worst roads and by the end of next year more than 60 kilometres of gravel road will have been upgraded.

This additional funding will assist Council in maintaining the gravel road network without compromising maintenance to the sealed roads.

Southland Mayor Frana Cardno said Council is absolutely delighted to get the funding, which has been collected in the region and should be spent in the region.

"It's a positive step, but we need a lot more," Mrs Cardno said.

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