The N1, N2 and N7 and R300 form SANRAL’s footprint in the Western Cape. In this province, SANRAL not only creates the infrastructure pipeline connecting our citizens with economic opportunities, but also makes a mark in the communities where construction goes beyond roads.
Building roads, uplifting communities, developing our industry

The Western Cape is one of the most beautiful provinces in our country, with a national road network that runs through breath-taking scenery. However, it is the people who live along these routes that really stand out. The roads we build are designed to impact positively the lives of the people we serve. We build roads to give our people access to the developmental opportunities they need to improve their lives.

So when we talk about the national road network being the arteries of our country, we really mean that the process starts with the people in mind. Going forward, we do not just want to build roads we think will best serve our communities; we will engage, consult and debate with all our stakeholders to find the best travel solutions – and that includes the Western Cape government and the city of Cape Town.

The N1, N2 and N7 traversing the Western Cape have been hubs of activity and progress over the past year. Roadworks are never pleasant, but they are necessary to effect progress and development. As far as possible, we try to involve the affected communities, not only by keeping them abreast of the projects’ progress, but by directly giving them access to work opportunities through our contractors and subcontractors.

SANRAL is an incredibly exciting project that will see graduates, under mentorship from senior engineers, raise the bar in how we incorporate technology to improve road user experiences across the national network. It is a privilege to play a role in bridging the skills gap in our country, as well as shaping this new generation of engineers and scientists.

Economists the world over agree that future economic growth will be increasingly reliant on the development of intellectual capital. That is exactly what SANRAL aims to achieve by investing in the education and development of talented and academically astute young people.

This intellectual capital is important to develop our country’s knowledge economy, which is focused on collaboration, knowledge-sharing and skills transfer. The Regional Manager, Kobus van der Walt, and his team hosted a Ugandan delegation earlier this year. The delegation expressed their intention to learn from SANRAL and apply this knowledge in the upgrade and development of their own national road network, from developing a database of contractors to implementing a Road Incident Management System (RIMS) and basic procurement practises and financial planning for road maintenance.

If we are to develop our continent, South Africa needs to take the lead in sharing our expertise with our fellow Africans. We are very proud of this collaboration with Uganda and will no doubt be exploring further opportunities in this regard.

We also know when to seek collaborative opportunities with the rest of the world and learn from international best practice. This region recently hosted the World Road Association’s seminar on road tunnel operations in low- and medium-income countries. Our own Huguenot Tunnel is 29 years old this year and in need of upgrade and some technological improvements to make sure that it remains fit for purpose for many years to come.

In this, as with all our other projects in the Western Cape and across the country, we will continue our efforts to build South Africa through better roads.

Skhumbuzo Macozoma is SANRAL’s CEO
The N7, fondly called the Cape-to-Namibia Highway, is a heavily used route, whether for leisure, commercial or industrial travel. Thousands of commuters also make use of sections of this route between Cape Town and Malmesbury on a daily basis. SANRAL has identified the need to improve the N7 from Melkbosstrand intersection to Malmesbury. The process of improving it is being undertaken in three separate projects.

**Upgrading of the N7 to a dual carriageway**

The existing single carriageway of the N7 Section 1 from km48 to km52 is being upgraded to a dual carriageway freeway, which would tie into the existing dual carriageway section, beginning south of the Darling Road Interchange at km52. This will allow for smooth, uninterrupted traffic flow and no public roads are affected along the road section included in this project.

**Darling Road Interchange**

This interchange is being upgraded in order to improve the capacity for traffic movement between the western and eastern parts of Malmesbury, situated on opposite sides of the N7. This would be accomplished by dualling the Darling/Bokomo road under the N7 and improving the layout of the N7 ramps and ramp terminals.

In doing thorough scenario planning, we considered seven alternative layout configurations during an initial screening process before deciding on the most appropriate, convenient and safe solution. This would entail the widening of the existing N7 underpass structure for dualling of Darling/Bokomo Road and providing pedestrian walkways under the N7.

Careful consideration is also given to regulating driver behaviour and as such, a median island dividing traffic in opposite directions would be provided along the sections of the Darling/Bokomo road earmarked for dualling, except at signalised intersections. This is an essential safety measure to prevent any illegal and dangerous turning movements. The median island would further contribute to road safety by providing a waiting point for pedestrians who have to cross the busy roads at one of the intersections.

**Pedestrian facilities**

Large parts of the communities along the N7 are rural, with many residents crossing the N7 on foot to access the industrial area, resulting in heavy pedestrian traffic all day. In particular, pedestrian movement across and along the N7 in the vicinity of Malmesbury has been identified as a safety concern to be addressed as part of the proposed upgrading. Although pedestrians cross the N7 at a number of places, the two areas of most concern are on the southern fringe of Malmesbury and in the vicinity of the Darling Road Interchange. Pedestrians would no longer legally be permitted to cross the N7 carriageway at ground level once it has been upgraded to a freeway, thus safe pedestrian facilities are prioritised along this route, to accommodate the residents of Lingulethu, Saamstaan and Wesbank, who wish to reach the Schoonspruit industrial area on the opposite side of the N7. The existing pedestrian crossing at the Darling Road Interchange underpass is being significantly upgraded to prioritise safety and traffic flow. A pedestrian walkway is also being parallel to the N7 on the western side from Saamstaan to the Darling Road Interchange.

Steph Bredenhann, SANRAL Project Manager for the N7 upgrade project, said: “We realise that roads are not just for cars, but for the people who rely heavily on an integrated road network to enable them to access economic and developmental opportunities.”

“We realise that roads are not just for cars, but for the people who rely heavily on an integrated road network to enable them to access economic and developmental opportunities.”
SANRAL provides a Wellness Programme for all its construction workers, including subcontractors and their immediate families, on Routine Road Maintenance (RRM) projects. Apart from regular talks, workers are offered free testing, counselling and the coordination of medical male circumcision, which has been proven to reduce HIV infection by up to 60%.

The Seta-accredited peer-educator training of 17 Regional Wellness Champions also contributes to the development of the knowledge economy in the Western Region. These trained facilitators are responsible for educating and providing assistance to road construction workers on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and substance abuse. These are often linked to sub-economic conditions such as poverty, illiteracy and lack of access to primary healthcare facilities, particularly in rural communities.

This means that many of the country’s roadside maintenance workers often suffer in silence and are vulnerable to lifestyle diseases, HIV infection and opportunistic infections such as TB.

“This awareness programme has made a massive difference in our community and also on site. Before we didn’t know what our rights were in terms of discrimination and also what treatment is available to us. Now we do – and not just ourselves but our families too,” said Shatere Mcanda, an RRM worker in De Aar, at a recent toolbox talk on disclosing one’s HIV/AIDS awareness.

A Wellness Champion’s ‘toolbox talk’ includes topics such as substance abuse and alcoholism, lifestyle disease management and prevention, as well as broader wellness communication campaigns. Wellness Days are unpacked during on-site talks by the Wellness Champions for that particular section of a national route.

Launched five years ago, the national programme (which was piloted in the Western and Northern Cape), has seen more than 2000 workers on the RRM projects having access to free health education and screenings. CareWorks, SANRAL’s HIV/AIDS treatment and workplace programmes service provider, also operates a confidential call centre for all RRM workers to discuss any issues affecting them.

After showing success in these two provinces, it was rolled out countrywide. Through partnerships with government clinics and successful service providers, the wellness programme includes screening for high blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol.

Colesburg’s Wellness Champion, Veronica Stonga, said: “Becoming a wellness champion changed my life. I now want to study further and in five years become a professional counsellor.”

Kobus van der Walt, Regional Manager for the Western Region, said: “We are aware of the low rainfall, prevailing drought conditions and ongoing water restriction. As a result, we may delay re-housing some of the plants until the next winter rainfall season to ensure that they stand a fighting chance in their natural environment.

“It is important that we maintain a fine balance that will ensure that infrastructure progress in the form of improved road networks can co-exist with our natural environment. I believe that we are doing just that, and I am proud of SANRAL’s excellent track record in working with environmental specialists, horticulturists and academia, to make sure we never take out more than we are putting back into the environment.”

An aerial view of the long, white structures that form a temporary home for close to 60 varieties of plant species, which are being kept safely away from construction activities while work on the N7 is under way.
SANRAL recognises the value of building our country and our continent’s knowledge economy by creating platforms for knowledge sharing and skills transfer. In May this year, the Western Region hosted a delegation from the Uganda National Roads Authority (Unra) in the Western Cape. This group specifically came in order to compare their existing infrastructure and systems with that of SANRAL, to take lessons from successfully implemented construction projects in South Africa and to benchmark against industry best practice as they endeavour to improve their systems and upgrade their national road network.

While the magnitude of the respective agencies’ road network is very similar – 21,946km under SANRAL jurisdiction, vs 20,540km under Unra jurisdiction, there are stark differences in the way the network is maintained, managed and developed.

SANRAL does not maintain any gravel roads, while Unra still has to maintain roughly 16,000km of these roads. SANRAL allocates 54% of its total budget to maintenance, while Unra sets aside only 8% for maintenance and upkeep.

The need to implement urgently a Road Incident Management System (RIMS) was identified, as was the need to refine procurement policies to counter corruption and ensure compliance with treasury regulations.

SANRAL’s Western Region Manager, Kobus van der Walt, said: “Several other issues were identified and we committed to continue to support and share knowledge with Unra. We are industry leaders in Africa and, as such, it is our duty to empower and support other developing African countries in their quest to improve their infrastructure. It only serves to benefit our entire continent economically, if road infrastructure is prioritised and developed to its maximum potential.”

We spoke to Tygerberg Chamber of Commerce Chairman Phillip van Zijl about the R300/Botelary Interchange that was officially opened in March.

It has been six months since the completion of this new interchange. Did you see a marked difference in the congestion in the area?

Absolutely. Access to the R300 for many residents in the greater Brackenfell and Kuils River area has been significantly impacted by this additional access road and the traffic definitely flows easier. As the residential sector expands, this interchange will, however, become increasingly over-subscribed, as it services not only commuters to and from their places of work, but also a significant component of commercial vehicles – trucks, freight, couriers, etc.

What was the situation like before the opening of this interchange?

Access to the R300 from Brackenfell, Stellenbosch and surrounds was a nightmare during the morning peak. Brackenfell is also the centre point in terms of major destinations, for example distance from Brackenfell to the city centre, to Paarl, to Stellenbosch – it’s all more or less the same. So for logistical purposes and the availability of land – many organisations have their distribution operations in this area, so the access roads to the major freeways are constantly under pressure, all day long.

When this interchange was opened, one of the key messages reiterated by SANRAL, The city of Cape Town and the Western Cape government, was that travel-demand management needed to be a major factor in how road users respond to congestion. What is the Chamber’s stance on this matter?

At the Chamber we highly support and encourage the notion of businesses allowing their staff to work flexitime or even work from home on certain days or part thereof.

This does, however, require a fundamental paradigm shift in the way business owners manage their staff and the associated outputs. While we welcome infrastructure upgrades like this new interchange, we also recognise that SANRAL cannot simply build more roads; it has to be a collective effort of managing the use of these resources.

How do you feel about employment opportunities for local labour in projects like this one?

We strongly advocate for the use of local labour, particularly since we have such alarming unemployment figures. I think people realise that there are not necessarily full-time jobs for everyone, but that there are many opportunities to do basic work and upgrade one’s skills at the same time. We particularly encourage our SMME members to consider the local labour force in the areas through which the projects run.

As the private sector, we have a collective responsibility to tackle unemployment in whatever small, but meaningful, way we can. This project was a great example of how local communities can benefit from work opportunities on their doorstep.
Who is SANRAL and for how long has it been in operation?
The South African National Roads Agency SOC Ltd (SANRAL) was established in April 1998 by an Act of Parliament as an independent statutory company, with the Minister of Transport as the sole shareholder. SANRAL stands on the verge of its 20th anniversary and is committed to its mandate to finance, improve, manage and maintain South Africa’s expanding national road network of 22,403km.

Tags were recently introduced for the Huguenot Tunnel in the Western Cape. Is that the same as e-tolls?
No. Automated Electronic Toll Payment is distinctly different from the Open Road Tolling on the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project (GFIP).

How does the tag payment system work?
With this method of toll collection, no cash transactions will take place. A tag is fitted to the windscreen of a vehicle. Vehicles equipped with a tag will slow down on approach to the toll booms. When the transponder in the tag is read by the tag reader mounted in the toll lane, the boom will open, allowing the vehicle to pass at a speed of about 30km per hour without having to stop, thus saving valuable time and energy.

Surely the Huguenot Tunnel must have been paid off by now. Why are tolls still being levied?
A declared toll road will never require any funds from the fiscus to maintain it to safe standards for its users. Tunnel maintenance is extremely expensive and the road needs to be kept in good condition at all times. Roads deteriorate over time due to traffic flow, weather and truck overloading, among many others. The upkeep of tunnel roads is not a once-off occurrence – it is continuous. This isn’t just applicable to the road itself, but also to the edges, road markings and technology associated with managing the tunnel.

How does SANRAL contribute to environmental sustainability?
The public generates significant amounts of litter daily on our national roads. Through its Routine Road Maintenance (RRM) teams, SANRAL collects on average nearly 15,000 bags of litter per month in the Western Cape. Careful consideration is also given to the impact of road construction projects on the plant life in the immediate area. When SANRAL started construction on the N7 in 2016, it carefully removed nearly 60 varieties of plant species, which were temporarily housed in nurseries and receptor areas while construction was under way. As construction is completed, plants, mostly Fynbos and bulb species, are systematically re-introduced to their natural environment, where many of them are thriving.

Where are SANRAL tenders advertised?
All first-tier tenders can be found in the following publications:

GOVERNMENT PRINTING WORKS
Tender Bulletin: www.gpwonline.org.co.za
E-Tender portal – National Treasury: www.etender.gov.za

DAILY TENDERS
Lead2business: www.l2b.co.za
SANRAL website: www.sanral.co.za
SAFCEC: www.safcec.org.za
CIDB: www.cidb.org.za

Sub-contracting tenders are advertised in the specific local and regional newspapers, linked to the areas in which the services will be rendered.

Which road construction projects in the Western Cape fall under SANRAL’s jurisdiction?
• N7 Melkbosstrand to Clanwilliam
• N1 Winelands
• N1 Sandhills to Langsberg
• N1 Langsberg to Three Sisters
• N2, R300
• N2 Section 1-2, Swartklip to Botrivier
• N2 Botrivier to Riversdal
• N2 Riversdal to Soutrivier

Does SANRAL offer bursaries?
Yes. SANRAL continues to support skills development in engineering and the built environment. In the last financial year, the bursary scheme gave educational opportunities to 108 undergraduate and 14 postgraduate students to pursue engineering qualifications at a range of SA universities, while 196 learners benefited from scholarships at top schools around the country. Bursary application forms can be found on the SANRAL website, www.sanral.co.za or email info@nra.co.za
SANRAL recently held a Jump the Q tag promotion at the Shell garage on the N1 in Worcester. The tag is an alternative to using cash as payment for passing through the Huguenot Toll Plaza. Many travellers stopping at the fuel station took the time to register for their tags and we chatted to a few about the system. The one thing everyone could agree on was that the tag saves time.

Porche Phillipus
“I am a regular user and I really don’t like queueing. Using my tag, I just go straight through. It’s hassle-free!”

Benjamin Bok
“It helps me a lot while travelling. The process is faster. I am very busy and don’t have time to waste.”

Franklin Adams
“I’m on a motorcycle, so the tag is very convenient. No more stopping to find change in my pocket, first having to take my gloves off. This works for me.”

Siyabonga Magadla
“This process does not waste time. Registration was also very quick. This is definitely a better way to go through the toll plaza.”
OUR ROADS IN YOUR PROVINCE

TIMELINE: IMPROVEMENT TO N7 BETWEEN ABBOTSDALE AND VOORTREKKER INTERCHANGE, MALMESBURY

MARCH 2015
Construction contract commencement

SEPTEMBER 2015
1st Test pile complete at Diep River Bridge

MARCH 2016
1st Pile and File capping complete at Diep River Bridge

AUGUST 2016
Retaining wall structure complete

MAY 2017
Deviation of traffic over Diep River Bridge B0368B

OCTOBER 2016
1st Mechanical Stabilised Earth Wall complete

FEBRUARY 2017
Bridge B0368B on N7 Southbound over Platklip River complete

MARCH 2017
Bridge B0368B on N7 Southbound over Diep River complete

JUNE 2017
B0367B on N7 Southbound over Underpass 1 complete

SEPTEMBER 2017
Malmesbury off-ramp AA and Bridge B0366A on N7 Northbound over Underpass 2 complete and open to traffic

JANUARY 2019
Estimated completion date

WHERE ARE WE?