

MEDIA RELEASE: Immediate



Pieter Pretorius, the Resident Engineer for V3 Consulting Engineers is on site while staff from Rumdel Cape Construction are busy repairing a burst water pipe in Campbell Street in Fort Beaufort. The workers from the left are Khululeki Djantyi, Thembinkosi Khanana and Thembalethu Mbevu.

Upgrading the Fort Beaufort to Alice road will bring improved access to market and economic opportunities for the Eastern Cape

Eastern Cape, 19 January 2021: Upgrading the R63 from Fort Beaufort to Alice will lower the vehicle operating cost and increase the provincial economy's integration, the South African National Roads Agency SOC Ltd (SANRAL) announced.

The three-year project will result in wider and safer roads that will bring much needed economic benefit to local communities and businesses, with skills development and job creation for an estimated 500 people.



“The project benefits to the province include the ease of travel between Fort Beaufort and the N2 at King Williams Town. The upgraded road will reduce the cost of the transportation of goods and services and facilitate greater economic activity. Furthermore, the upgrade of this road means there will be improved access to the market for surrounding settlements, as well as economic opportunities in other parts of the province,” said Mbulelo Peterson, SANRAL Southern Region Manager.

The new road will remain a single carriageway, albeit with a much wider, 13.4-metre-wide cross-section than the current 7m wide road. The road will also feature designated climbing lanes for trucks transporting goods to minimise congestion and traffic build-up as is currently experienced. The completed project will contribute to reduced cost and time savings.

The provincial government transferred the R63 route, in 2012, to be incorporated into the SANRAL road network.

On a technical level, the upgrade of the 23km road will improve and increase road capacity from Fort Beaufort to Alice. The substandard 7m surfaced road with gravel shoulders, sharp curves, and steep slopes are upgraded to a wider 13.4m cross-section, including paved shoulders, gentle curves, flatter geometry, and climbing lanes. The project also includes upgrading new community access roads and pedestrian walkways. The construction of temporary deviations will minimise the impact of the traffic flows during construction activities.

The Fort Beaufort main road, Campbell street, will be rehabilitated, which includes the relocation of the old and unreliable sewer system and water mains that runs in the middle of the street.

Since SMME participation is an essential component of all SANRAL projects, at least 60 SMMEs will be appointed over the construction period, with a target of approximately 20 women-owned businesses. All SMME contractors will receive training before their construction starts with ongoing mentoring throughout the project. Apart from training on how to tender, the successful sub-contractors will also receive training on installing culverts, construction of concrete side drains, kerb laying, construction of gabions, road signs erection, and pavement repair failures.

A material testing laboratory, managed by SGS Matrolab, has also been established to test the properties of construction materials used in upgrading the road.



Teboho Rakako, a Senior Material Tester for SGS Matrolab, prepares the concrete cubes for curing.



Buli Mthembu is testing the plasticity index in soil.

Some of the major roadworks on this project include:

- the construction of mass earthworks and new pavement layers,
- Installation of pre-cast pipe and box culverts,
- the construction of concrete inlet/outlet structures,
- the erection of guardrails, road signs and fencing where required,
- the widening of two existing bridge structures, namely the Kat River and Brak River Bridges,
- construction of a new bridge over Mxelo river,
- the replacement of two road-over-rail bridges at Kwatinidubu Rail Bridge and Kwezana Rail Bridge,
- the installation of street lighting from the Kat River Bridge, just outside Fort Beaufort, through Campbell Street to the new Sports Centre Development,
- the relocation of the water main and sewer system in Campbell Street and
- the upgrading of the drainage system and parking facilities in Campbell street



Box culverts are being installed to accommodate the storm water under the existing road. Temporary pipes are placed under the deviation to accommodate rainwater flowing through the existing culvert.



Nomaxabiso Ndzundzu works as a flag lady on the project. The project will bring much needed economic benefits to the communities.

"The construction of a wider road with minimal vertical and horizontal curves will lead to safer and smoother travel by the public," Peterson said.

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*Issued by FTI Consulting on behalf of the South African National Roads Agency SOC Limited (SANRAL)
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