



R364-million investment in road infrastructure empowers local businesses in Mpumalanga

In a significant move to enhance rural road infrastructure in Mpumalanga, the South African National Roads Agency (SOC) Limited (SANRAL) has invested R364 million in the resurfacing and restoration of the N17 section 5 near the Oshoek border post and Chrissiesmeer.

This substantial investment was unveiled during a Ministerial Imbizo held at Nhlazatshe on 22 May 2024. Minister of Transport, Sindisiwe Chikunga, began the day by assessing the state of the road and engaging with the local community at Elukwatini Stadium.

Chikunga also interacted with public transport operators who use the N17 daily. They expressed their appreciation for the improved road conditions.

As part of SANRAL's transformation policy, R60 million was allocated to local small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) for this project, with R10 million dedicated to labour costs. The initiative brings opportunities closer to village-based SMMEs, empowering them to participate in the development of their communities.

Mpolokeng Luthuli, a local woman SMME owner, expressed her gratitude to SANRAL for the opportunity to work on this project.

"As a black woman in construction, it's not easy to get opportunities like these. SANRAL opened its doors to us, provided pre-tender training, and boosted our confidence. We've moved from one grade to the next," she said.

Obed Monare, another local SMME beneficiary, thanked SANRAL for the chance to gain practical experience on the project.

"I'm a civil engineer by profession, but I've learned a lot from this project. The experienced engineers and project managers are passionate about teaching, and we're grateful for the opportunity," Monare said.

Local political leader, Derrick Mdluli from the South African Communist Party (SACP), praised the minister for delivering essential services to the people.

“We thank the minister for closing the potholes in this area,” said Mdluli. “We've been crying for a long time, and we're happy she's heard our cries. This intervention stemmed from meetings we held with her office long ago because we were worried about the condition of the road, which placed scores of motorists at risk.”

Meanwhile, Chikunga expressed deep concern over the ongoing use of unsafe vehicles for learner transport, following a bus crash in Nhlazatshe on the same day. The crash involved a learner transport bus carrying high school learners to the Imbizo.

Most of the children were treated for shock, trauma and mild injuries, with 50 learners taken to Embhuleni Provincial Hospital. Forty-nine were reportedly discharged, while the remaining learner was kept overnight for observation due to an underlying medical condition.

Changing her plans, to respond to the emergency, Chikunga visited the scene of the crash and the injured learner at the hospital, emphasising the need for safe and roadworthy vehicles for learner transport.

“Unsafe vehicles will not be tolerated, and every effort must be made to ensure that schools contract with service providers who prioritise safety over profits,” she said.

The Minister also donated 694 Shovakalula bicycles to underprivileged learners, demonstrating the government's commitment to empowering the next generation.

Community member and teacher, Lindiwe Sibiya, welcomed the minister's visit and the donation of bicycles, saying, “We're happy the children now have bicycles for transport to school. This has brought joy to the entire community. The minister's visit and career guidance have shown that the government truly cares about our children's future.”

//Ends

Issued by FTI Consulting on behalf of SANRAL. For editorial content or additional information, please contact pressoffice@nra.co.za