

For Immediate Release

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Engineering feat sees Baywest N2 bridge up in record time

Region's biggest N2 roads project in a decade sees innovative developments

(Port Elizabeth) – Developers of the R300m Baywest road network, the largest roads project in the Nelson Mandela Bay region in more than 10 years, on Friday (July 4) began meticulously placing the first of the 70-ton concrete beams which make up the bridge linking two sides of Port Elizabeth across the N2 freeway.

The double bridge was specifically designed to reduce construction time while ensuring maximum safety for the contractor and road users during the construction period.

Basil Read, which was awarded the tender to construct the road network by the South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL) last year, is set to complete the bridge – the first across the N2 in the region in more than a decade – in record time.

The faster build means N2 motorists will be inconvenienced for a third of the usual time – four months as opposed to up to 12 months using conventional building methods. According to AECOM engineer on the project, Gerrie Albertyn, all 12 of the 70-ton concrete beams which make up the bridge were precast in a controlled area, off-site.

This meant that all 12 beams could be laid six at a time, closing off each side of the N2 for just two months (four month in total), said Albertyn. Usually, the concrete is cast “in-situ” on site, with scaffolding needed under the bridge to support the slab while it cured, resulting in each side of the N2 being closed for up to six months.

“The added benefit of this system is that the beams have been cast in a special yard set up for casting concrete in controlled conditions. In the past, casting all the concrete in-situ resulted in the work being exposed to the elements, which made it more difficult to achieve the tight tolerances,” he said.

The project required absolute precision, said Albertyn. Each 70-ton beam could be out of position by no more than 10mm when laid on the bridge bearings.

With 230 employees working feverishly to complete most of the network in time for Baywest Mall’s opening in March next year, it was all hands on deck, said Albertyn. He added that the network would reduce rush-hour traffic in the city’s western suburbs.

“At the moment there is a lot of congestion around the Macro interchange along Samantha Way and Frikkie Kotze Drive. This network will give people a link onto the N2 and later up to Cape Road,” said Albertyn.

The extension of Walker Drive and the road circling Baywest Mall, as well as the two on-ramps and two off-ramps leading to and from the mall from the N2, were set for completion by next March. The connection to Cape Road – the first phase of the long-awaited Redhouse Chelsea arterial route – would be completed by October next year, said Albertyn.

Baywest MD Gavin Blows welcomed the milestone, saying that it prepared the area for the future growth of the city, in line with the municipality’s 2020 vision.

“This road network has been a long time coming and will help unlock economic growth in the city’s western suburbs,” said Blows. “It’s a project which we are very excited about and which is being overseen by the top experts in the industry.

“This bridge represents a critical link between two sides of Port Elizabeth, and more importantly it points towards the start of exciting and much-needed economic growth in the city.”

(ends – 562 words)

Photograph:

[Baywest bridge - 08 July 2014 (b)]

CRITICAL LINK: Work has commenced on laying the “critical link” in the R300m Baywest road network in Port Elizabeth’s western suburbs, the bridge over the N2 freeway connecting two sides of the city.

[Baywest bridge - 08 July 2014 (d)]

PRECISION WORK: Engineers have begun placing the 70-ton pre-cast concrete beams which make up the N2 bridge, which is part of the R300m Baywest road network in Port Elizabeth’s western suburbs.

FAST FACTS:

- The mall size, 87,500m², is the gross leasable area and excludes the parking area for about 3,200 vehicles.
- The development of the mall is a joint venture between Abacus Asset Management and Billion Group.
- The construction value of the mall is approximately R1.7-billion, with a further R300-million being spent on developing the road network in the area. The road network includes an interchange onto/off the N2 freeway, as well as the Redhouse-Chelsea arterial road, linking the suburbs of Sherwood and Rowallan Park via a road over the N2.
- The mall is central to the development of the greater Baywest City project, which will be similar in concept to Cape Town’s Century City development.
- Up to 30% of the Baywest City site has been allocated for environmental preservation and will not be developed at all.

ABOUT THE DEVELOPERS:

- The Baywest development is a joint venture between two major South African developers, Abacus Asset Management and Billion Group. Between them, the developers have over 25 years of experience specialising in retail, commercial and mixed-use developments located in major South African cities. With super-regional shopping centres, landmark office towers and golf course developments, the developers have successfully completed malls such as Hemingways in East London, Eikestad Mall in Stellenbosch, Cape Gate in the Western Cape and Mooi Rivier Mall in Potchefstroom.

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