

Attention: Media

For Immediate Release

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SANRAL Project's Safety, Economic Spin offs take centre stage

HARRISMITH – The safety and macro-economic benefits of the South African National Roads Agency Limited's (SANRAL) endorsed De Beers Expressway project were highlighted at a media site visit that the roads agency hosted on Thursday.

Informing journalists, SANRAL's general manager: communications, Vusi Monasa said once the De Beers Expressway proposed route has been completed, this will significantly ease the congestion on the current Van Reenen's Pass route and will result in higher levels of safety, comfort and productivity for all road users.

"Should the Expressway be constructed, it will be an entirely new stretch of highway across the Drakensberg escarpment in the vicinity of the existing De Beers Pass. It will be a 99 kilometre four-lane highway that will link Keeversfontein (Tugela Toll Plaza) in KwaZulu-Natal with Warden in the Free State Province. The new route will be 15 kilometres shorter, its grades will be much flatter and its alignment will be much smoother without the sharp and many curves of the existing N3 route. Much time will be saved and better levels of service will result in improved safety and a reduction in accidents," Mona said.

According to Mona, the existing Van Reenen's Pass route built in 1961 is no longer able to effectively handle the growth in traffic volumes. In recent years the number of accidents on the route had increased, resulting in scores of fatalities and road users being inconvenienced through sporadic road closures.

Accidents and road closures are regular occurrences on the Van Reenen's Pass due to the steepness of the road and the sharp and many curves. It is particularly hazardous to drive during cold and wet weather.

"Total closure time increased from just less than 80 hours on the southbound road in 2011 to 95, 6 hours in 2013. On the northbound road this grew from 88, 25 to 102 hours. The economic impact of road closures translates into tens of millions of rands," Mona said.

The N3 route has been identified as one of the priorities of the multibillion rand *Strategic Infrastructure Project* which is crucial to unblocking economic development and providing much needed capacity along key freight corridors in South Africa.

Construction of the De Beers Expressway route is crucial to plans to develop the Durban-Free State-Gauteng logistics and industrial corridor which is vital to the future of the national and regional economies.

“With Durban handling over 40% of the country’s imports and exports, and Gauteng being the country’s economic heartland generating over 33% of the country’s gross domestic product, the Durban-Free State-Gauteng corridor is by far the most important economic corridor in the country and this route will directly contribute approximately R4, 4 billion annually towards South Africa’s GDP,” says Mona.

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Issued by Meropa Communications on behalf of the South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL)