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Agility Keeps Concor Infrastructure Project On Track

The South African National Roads Agency SOC Limited (SANRAL) project on the N2, between Mtunzini and Empangeni in KwaZulu-Natal, has brought with it its own challenges and in so doing has allowed Concor Infrastructure to demonstrate its agility as one of South Africa's leading roads contractors.

The project, which includes substantial works such as the building of 11 bridges, comprises the construction of a new northbound carriageway and the rehabilitation of the existing road to form the future southbound carriageway on this 34 km section of the N2.

Jonathan Pearce, Concor Infrastructure's contracts manager on this project, says that while it is certainly not unusual to fine tune the construction programme on a major roads project such as this, the level of adaptability and flexibility required on an almost daily basis bears testimony to the company's reputation for delivering on complex roads and infrastructure projects.

"Detailed planning forms the basis of all successful projects, however the high level of agility required on this project places it in a category of its own," he says. Significantly, agility is one of Concor's intrinsic values together with teamwork, care, trust and delivery.

Among the challenges experienced since the contract start in March 2016 has been the unpredictable tropical climate of the region with some weather events causing significant damage to works with consequential delays. Geotechnical difficulties were also experienced during piling activities on some of the critical bridges leading to delays to the construction programme for these structures.

Pearce says that the project remains on track and this is largely due to the team's ability to adapt the sequencing to accommodate the various challenges as these have been confronted on site. "Not only is it about having a quick and appropriate reaction to situations as these arise, but it is also about having the necessary in-depth technical knowledge and practical experience as well as the necessary resources to minimise the impact of the consequential delays."

A critical requirement of all major roads projects today is the up skilling of SMMEs from within the local communities. It is critical to be able to identify those individual enterprises that have the requisite basic knowledge and skills sets required for a particular task, and then to develop, mentor and grow these small businesses to become sustainable in their own right.

“In many instances, the learning curve for these SMMEs has been massive and it has required the construction programme to have the in-built flexibility to change at short notice to accommodate issues with the works packages where SMMEs are involved,” he says.

Careful planning applied to these areas of work which have included sub-soil drains, pipe culverts and head and wing walls has allowed the impact to be minimised wherever possible, while still ensuring that the quality of workmanship meets the high standards that Concor Infrastructure imposes on itself and its subcontractors.

An example where an SMME has contributed positively to the project is the construction of the v-drains which is being done using slip forming. The mechanisation of this task has ensured consistent quality and eliminated wastage, saving both on time and cost.

Commenting on the status, Pearce says that the road works have progressed to the point where most of the earthworks have been done as well as a significant portion of the layer works.

Asphalt work is also underway. The project will consume around 220 000 tonnes of asphalt and Concor Infrastructure established its own Comar asphalt batching plant on site, resulting in additional time and cost savings.

Of the 11 bridges, three are at a point where deck construction is underway and on the remaining eight only parapet work is still to be done. The two largest bridges are road over river structures with the eight span uMhlathuze River bridge being the longest at 240 metres while the uMlalazi River Bridge is 120 metres long. The former is at 75% completion while the latter is 90% complete. The extension of all four overpass bridges has been completed and Empangeni interchange bridge is almost finished.

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Concor Infrastructure achieved the massive milestone of 2 million Lost Time Injury Free (LTIF) hours on the Mtunzini project. What is particularly significant is that the work is conducted on numerous faces on this complex construction project with a vast array of engineering facets being employed.

“Safety is an important focus at Concor, and the achievement on this site shows that the objective of zero-harm is within reach,” Pearce says. “Attention is given to ongoing skills development and training to ensure that all stakeholders, not just the Concor people, understand the safety requirements that have enabled us to reach this milestone.”

The site follows a stringent safety protocol on all its activities, which is underpinned by Concor’s Visible Felt Leadership approach.

UPDATE PIC 01 : Jonathan Pearce, Concor Infrastructure contracts manager.

UPDATE PIC 02 : V-drains being constructed by an SMME contractor on Concor Infrastructure's N2 contract.

UPDATE PIC 03 : Stabilisation underway on Concor Infrastructure's N2 contract.

UPDATE PIC 04 : Parapet construction on the Port Dunford bridge on Concor Infrastructure's n2 contract.

UPDATE PIC 05 : A view of the new bridge and the old bridge over the Mhlathuzi River on Concor Infrastructure's N2 contract

UPDATE PIC 06 : Asphaltting under way on Concor Infrastructure's N2 contract.

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