

Premier's road projects questioned

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POLITICAL figures from two opposition parties and the ANC have raised questions about Premier Thandi Modise's multimillion-rand infrastructure projects set for this year.

Modise announced during her state of the province address that R200m would be spent on the roll out of 30 road rehabilitation and maintenance projects during the 2013-14 financial year.

She said that the R200m was earmarked for roads rehabilitation and maintenance, some of which would be contracted to small to medium enterprises.

"Thirty road projects will be under construction in 2013-14 as well as 24 building construction projects," she said.

Last year President Jacob Zuma said that 10 road projects in the province were to be done by the SA National Roads Agency Limited (Sanral). The number has been increased this year.

"I'm pleased to announce that the roads have been increased to 25 as gazetted on September 28, 2012, that will be part of the strategic infrastructure project. Sanral is the appointed implementing agent," Modise said.

DA provincial leader Chris Hattingh said the announcement by Modise simply meant that the province had abdicated its duty to develop roads.

"What would the public works department do and where would the budget for roads go?

"This confirms that there is no capacity in the province for us to do our own roads because while 10 roads were acceptable, increasing them to 25 simply does not add up," he said.

Other politicians serving on the portfolio committee on public works also raised the same concerns.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, one member queried: "What is the status of the Koster-Lichtenburg and the Wolmaransstad to Schweizer-Reneke roads? People in those areas have long been waiting for these roads to be completed yet the public works department keeps on making unfulfilled promises.

"Last year, most of the staff in the department was doing nothing on the roads after a bungle in the procurement of diesel."

Work on the Koster-Lichtenburg road is yet to resume since the provincial government paid off Down Touch Investments last year. Farmers and residents who use the road have been waiting for its completion since rehabilitation work started in 2008.

They also cited the issue of Mahikeng revitalisation where roads in the city are in a state of disrepair.

"The premier was silent on the Mahikeng revitalisation project and yet funds are allocated to the public works department. We are likely to see massive roll-overs because nothing was done in the previous financial year on the roads budget," another member said.

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