



ON THE ROAD AGAIN: Premier Supra Mahumapelo, right, says there is now a contractor on site for the Nelson Mandela Highway and work to upgrade the pothole-riddled road will begin soon. The highway connects Mahikeng to Lichtenburg. PICTURE: MPHO BILWANE

Highway gets overdue upgrade

A R460m construction projects is expected to remove potholes and give a new look to the Nelson Mandela Highway

ELFAS TORERAI

A CONTRACTOR is now on site to begin work on upgrading the Nelson Mandela Highway connecting Mahikeng and Lichtenburg.

Road construction company M Civils Makali Civilcon Joint Venture (JV) won the bid for the R460m project that is expected to give a new look to the pothole-riddled highway.

With the rainy season in full throttle, the condition of the road has taken a turn for the worse especially on a patch near the Rooigrond Prison.

A number of motorists have been complaining lately as some experienced tire punctures and other damage to their vehicles due to the poor state of the road.

Premier Supra Mahumapelo, who commissioned the upgrading of the

road, last year said all will be well soon.

"We can confirm that a contractor is now on site and work on the road will begin at any time.

"Our motorists should bear with us that road conditions tend to get worse when rains fall. The same rain also affects the quality of work done on the roads but we are confident that very soon, the road would be in good shape," he said.

The length of the portion set to be upgraded is about 28.5km and indications are that the upgrades will be done in phases.

Priority has been given to sorting the portion around Rooigrond Prison because of the many potholes in the area, with R127m being designated for this.

Work is expected to commence before the end of this month.

The Nelson Mandela Highway is technically an extension of Nelson Mandela Street from the Mahikeng inner city towards Lichtenburg.

Some of the key features the new road will bring includes that from Danville to the Rooigrond Prison area where a new dual carriageway will be built to enable two vehicles to travel in one direction, both ways.

This suggests the road will be broadened to also accommodate the increased traffic volumes leaving or entering Mahikeng city.

A traffic circle is also part of the mix for free-flow traffic from the direction of Bophelong Hospital. The traffic circle itself is envisaged to have captivating themes like a fountain and decorations

that show Mahikeng as a city of goodwill in order to enhance its status as the seat of the provincial government.

About 650 job opportunities are set to be created for local people during the construction period.

"We are widening this road in response to a number of lives lost in the Rooigrond area. We appeal to community members in that area to desist from digging up the road or burning tyres because that creates potholes that in turn cause accidents and people die. Whatever grievance people may have should be brought to government. We will listen," Mahumapelo said.

The decision to plan the mega upgrade generated a lot of interest as the road is seen as strategic for the economy of Mahikeng.

Mahumapelo said internal roads in Mahikeng will also be attended to after potholes developed due to the heavy rains experienced so far.

Head of communications of public works and roads, Matshube Mfoloe said they have envisaged upgrading other roads leading to Mahikeng as well.

"Plans were announced to upgrade the road from Setlopo through Mantsa to Mareetsane (41km), the road from Lokaleng (Mmabatho Unit 2) to Tlapeng (29km) and Nooitgedacht to Kaalpan Road (16km). Half of these will be regravelled.

"The Department of Public Works and Roads is in the process of appointing engineers to design the latter roads," he said.

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