
R970M FOR PROVINCE'S HUGE UPGRADES

THERE is a switch in emphasis in how millions will be spent on provincial roads this year.

More millions will be spent on patching and blading of roads, but less will be spent on building new roads.

However, immediate repairs to flood-damaged roads will be possible out of R90-million in the maintenance budget for these disasters. There are still 17 new road construction projects on the go this year and commitment to start five more, but the budget for building tarred roads has slipped R22-million from R992-million last year to R970-million this year.

It dips even further next year by R202-million with R768-million budgeted. Why? Roads and public works MEC Thandiswa Marawu says: "This is due to limited resources".

On the plus side, the department is pumping an extra R163million into rehabilitation, resealing, blacktop patching, regravelling and blading of gravel roads up from R549-million last year to R712-million this year. Next year there is even more money for repairs when the budget hits R866million (R154-million more).

In fact, the department is pushing the pace with repairs, breaking its third-quarter target of repairing 464km and actually fixing 611km. It doubled its patching target of 28 314m² by patching 57 286m²

This work does not include work carried out by Sanral, which is busy with 14 projects on behalf of the department, one of them is the Sabalele project to upgrade 18km of road to Chris Hani's birthplace off the R61.

Sanral is also spending R1.8-billion on the R63 alone.

Upgrading of the Elitheni coal mine road (R190-million over three years) has been mired in litigation since 2013.