

Work to start on R1.6bn N2 bridge

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THE construction of the N2 Wild Coast Mtentu Bridge valued at R1.6-billion is set to start in early November.

The project, according to premier Phumulo Masualle, will unlock economic growth in the area, and is scheduled to take about 40 months.

This means construction will be completed in late 2021, which is also the estimated time of the completion of the Wild Coast toll road project.

This week Sanral announced the awarding of the tender to start the construction of Mtentu Bridge.

This just a week after Masualle met with minister of Transport Joe Maswanganyi to discuss the project.

After this meeting Maswanganyi announced the project was expected to attract 600 000 tourists to the Eastern Cape once complete.

Maswanganyi said the 112km-long greenfields portion of the N2 Wild Coast between Ndwalana and Mtamvuna River would cost R9-billion.

Masualle described the N2 project as a giant step towards lifting the province through investment in infrastructure.

"A world-class highway is critical to the successful implementation of our 2030 Provincial Development Plan," said Masualle.

"This strategy focuses strongly on tourism, agriculture and the growth of the oceans economy, and requires a reliable road network to attract new investment.

"We therefore welcome the commitment by Sanral that local business, SMMEs and local labour will benefit greatly from the construction activities," he said.

"Local suppliers will be first in line to provide goods and services to the project and the training and skills development programmes associated with the construction will enable many local entrepreneurs to become fully fledged contractors and create more local jobs."

According to Masualle, the project would also go a long way in dealing with past injustices such as the marginalisation of the indigenous people from opportunities through the apartheid spatial planning.

"When completed the road and bridges will reduce travel time and benefit the many black-owned and emerging enterprises which require safe and reliable infrastructure to gain a foothold in the tourism, commercial and agro-processing sectors," said Masualle.

The road will stretch from East London, around Butterworth, through Mthatha then join the R61 towards Port St John's. Various traffic calming and safety measures have already been put in place by the provincial department of public works with overpasses and underpasses already constructed in some parts of the R61 towards PSJ.

The road between Dutywa and Mthatha is already under construction, with random rock blasting taking place on some weeks. —
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