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Recent photo and drone footage of the once-tarred R522 between Louis Trichardt and Vivo. It is clear that the road will remain in a poor state for the foreseeable future as Road Agency Limpopo faces a major budget cut. In the meantime, residents from the Vivo farming communities, as well as those from Kutama and Sinthumule, must brave the dangerous road conditions daily. *Photos supplied.*

R522 deathtrap to remain?

BY ANDRIES VAN ZYL

It would seem that road users will have to make peace with the fact that the busy R522 between Louis Trichardt and Vivo will remain in its current state – dangerous, almost undrivable in places, and far worse than before Road Agency Limpopo (RAL) started rehabilitating it.

RAL is clearly currently facing significant challenges in delivering on its mandate to maintain Limpopo's roads. The rehabilitation of the R522 is just one of many contracts negatively affected, mainly due to severe budget cuts.

Regarding the R522, South African taxpayers are nearly R8 million poorer, with little to show for it except a dangerously degraded stretch

of road. The R522 was earmarked for rehabilitation in April 2024, but work ground to a halt after the appointed contractor, Tycofield, delivered just 15% of the project. Road Agency Limpopo (RAL) terminated Tycofield's contract in November last year, leaving the road in worse condition than before and with no clear indication of when construction will resume.

RAL spokesperson Danny Legodi later confirmed that the process of appointing a new contractor was under way, with tenders for the 24 km repair project closing on 17 February 2025.

According to the most recent information, RAL is responsible for maintaining a provincial road network of about 20,000 km. Of this total, approximately 6,000 km are paved (tarred) roads, and the remainder, around 14,000 km,

are unpaved (gravel) roads.

Ms Marie Helm, Member of Parliament and the Democratic Alliance's (DA) spokesperson for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, recently painted a bleak picture regarding RAL. On 31 July this year, she issued a statement claiming that the situation has now gone from bad to worse.

In her statement, Helm indicates that RAL is currently facing significant challenges regarding road maintenance and upgrades in Limpopo, including the R522. The R522 project in the Makhado municipal area has, according to her, been completely abandoned, with no contractor appointed as of July 2025, despite previous promises that maintenance work would start on 1 April 2025. This abandonment is largely attributed to severe budget cuts for RAL,

with its funding reduced from R2.886 billion in 2024/25 to under R1 billion in subsequent years, impacting its capacity to maintain and improve roads effectively.

This situation reflects broader funding and operational constraints affecting RAL's ability to maintain the province's roads adequately. Helm said that the DA in Limpopo had written to Limpopo Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure MEC Ernest Rachoene, expressing grave concern about the number of RAL projects, including the R522 project, that have been abandoned after RAL was stripped of almost all of its functions. She said that the MEC was creating massive chaos, and the residents of Limpopo were suffering as a result.

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