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GTM Cllr Conny Ramothwala, GTM Mayor Odas Ngoneni, MEC Ernest Rachoene and Agri Letaba CEO Naomi Excell at the handover of the project.

No trucks on Magoebas

Heavy vehicles will continue using George's Valley Road during the rehabilitation

Anwen Mojela

Heavy vehicles will continue using the George's Valley Road during the upcoming rehabilitation of the road, as they are not permitted to use the Magoebaskloof Pass R71 route, according to the Limpopo Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure.

Department spokesperson Emmanuel Mongwe said truck operators and construction teams would work together to ensure

traffic continues flowing while repairs are underway on the D548 George's Valley Road.

"Vehicles will be guided through sections of the road that have not yet been affected by construction activities," said Mongwe.

"This will allow the project to proceed while maintaining access for freight transport and other road users."

He added that while no completion date could be confirmed at this stage, the project

has been prioritised and must be completed as quickly as possible following instructions from department, MEC Ernest Rachoene.

The rehabilitation project has been widely welcomed by the local farming community, particularly Agri Letaba, which has spent more than a decade advocating for upgrades to the road.

CEO Naomi Excell described the appointment of three contractors to repair the road as a positive and significant step for both farmers and road users.

"This is an encouraging development for the farming community and the broader public who rely on this route daily," she said.

Excell noted that Agri Letaba and local farmers have raised concerns about the road's poor

condition with authorities for the past 11 years.

She added that the organisation is grateful to Rachoene and the department for addressing their concerns and taking action.

While the road plays an important role in supporting agricultural activity and the local economy, Excell stressed that safety remains the most important reason for the upgrade.

"The road is used daily by school buses, community members, emergency services, farm workers and approximately 1 800 vehicles. Its poor condition has posed a serious risk to motorists and pedestrians alike," she said.

The road is also a vital transport route for the agricultural sector. Large quantities of fresh fruit and vegetables destined for

local and international markets are transported along the route. According to Excell, poor road conditions can affect the quality of produce during transportation, resulting in financial losses for farmers and impacting export standards.

George's Valley resident Rona McGaffin said the community was relieved to finally see progress after years of campaigning for the road's rehabilitation.

"Although only approximately 9km will be upgraded, there are talks of an extra 1km upgrade in front of Diggersrest and hopefully another 3km at the start of the George's Valley Road coming from town," she said.

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Rona McGaffin during the handover.

George's Valley road upgrade finally underway

Anwen Mojela

After more than a decade of persistent lobbying and engagement with government authorities, the long-awaited upgrade of the Georges Valley Road (R528) has officially moved a step closer to reality.

Last week, MEC for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, Ernest Rachoene, formally handed over the project to three appointed contractors, marking a significant milestone for the George's Valley community and stakeholders who have spent the past 11 years advocating for improvements to the critical route.

Although construction was initially expected to begin earlier, implementation was delayed due to exceptionally heavy rainfall and widespread flooding, which caused significant damage to infrastructure across Limpopo. Despite these setbacks, community representatives expressed appreciation that the project remained a priority and eventually moved forward.

During the upgrade of the R71 several years ago, traffic volumes on the Georges Valley Road increased substantially.

The road, which was

not originally designed to accommodate such a high number of heavy vehicles, subsequently suffered extensive wear and deterioration.

The community's security camera network, which monitors traffic along the route, indicates that an average of 1 772 vehicles use the road daily.

These include private vehicles, taxis, buses and a considerable number of cargo trucks transporting agricultural products, building materials and consumer goods supplied by major distributors and retailers.

Rona McGaffin, a Tzaneen Chamber of Commerce member and George's Valley resident, acknowledged that funding constraints remain a reality but expressed optimism about continued collaboration between the community, Roads Agency Limpopo (RAL) and the Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure.

"We understand that funds are limited and therefore look forward to working closely with RAL and the Department of Public Works to ensure that this road becomes as safe and efficient as possible for residents, employees, tourists and all other road users," she said.