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Sjampanje bridge rebuild gains momentum

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Wilgeheuwel — Reconstruction of the Sjampanje Street bridge has entered its next phase, with the old bridge demolished and excavation work continuing.

The Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA) is progressing with rebuilding the collapsed structure since it partially collapsed during heavy rains in December 2023, forcing motorists, residents and school traffic to use alternative routes for more than two and a half years.

The project was awarded a budget of R25.8m, and residents travelling past the site have witnessed significant changes in recent weeks.

The damaged bridge structure has been removed, extensive excavations have been completed, the stream beneath the crossing has been diverted to allow construction to continue safely, and existing services have been relocated to prepare the site for the new bridge.

While many residents have welcomed the visible progress, concerns remain about the leaning electricity pylon adjacent to the construction site.

The JRA officially launched the reconstruction project in May after construction was delayed due to a leaking sewer pipe next to the bridge. The work completed

so far reflects the initial phases presented to residents during a public meeting in February, which included demolishing the existing bridge, relocating services, carrying out earthworks and preparing the site for construction.

JRA's head of infrastructure Kwazelela Mcetywa said the project is now in the construction phase.

"The project is currently in the construction phase, and the current activities underway on site include the diversion of the existing stream, relocation of existing services, demolition of the existing bridge structure, earthworks, and the procurement of local SMMEs," said Mcetywa.

According to Mcetywa, construction will now progress to installing rockfill before work begins on the new bridge structure.

This will include constructing the foundations, wing walls, culvert barrels and top slabs, followed by the road approaches, stormwater infrastructure, asphalt surfacing, erosion protection measures, guardrails, road signs, road markings and landscaping.

Mcetywa said the project is also creating opportunities for the local community, with a community liaison officer appointed, 10 Expanded Public Works Programme participants employed and procurement of local small, medium and micro enterprises nearing completion.

The City of Johannesburg MMC for Transport, Cllr Kenny Kunene, together with the JRA board and JRA CEO Zweli Nyathi, officially marked the start of the project during a sod-turning ceremony on May 7.

Despite minor delays experienced during the early stages of construction, Mcetywa said the overall programme remains on schedule.

"The project is scheduled to complete in January, subject to favourable weather conditions. While there are minor delays on site currently, the completion date currently remains unchanged," he said.

Once completed, the new bridge will provide improved stormwater capacity and erosion protection, restoring an important transport route linking residential areas, schools and businesses for more than two and a half years.

JRA CEO Zweli Nyathi at the sod-turning event.

