

Construction starts on new road at Baywest

Construction of a new R300m road infrastructure in Port Elizabeth's western suburbs has started. The new road will put city residents at the doorstep of Baywest Mall with access to the double-storey mall and the Baywest precinct from the N2 freeway.



The road infrastructure is the realisation of the first phase of the city's long-awaited Redhouse-Chelsea Interchange road network, which has been unlocked by the Baywest development. The first phase of the new road network, being built by construction company Basil Read, will link the suburbs of Sherwood and Rowallan Park which are on opposite sides of the N2 freeway along which the Baywest Mall is being built. This will be done by joining Walker Drive in Sherwood to Cape Road in Rowallan Park.

There will also be an interchange with on and off ramps to the N2, allowing easy access from the freeway to Baywest Mall and at the same time alleviating traffic congestion in the western suburbs. Eventually, the network will link up opposite ends of the city, Redhouse and Chelsea.

Joint funding

Baywest MD Gavin Blows says the Baywest developers, Abacus Asset Management and Billion Group, as well as the South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL), will pay the bulk of the costs for the new network, with the city contributing 15% of the costs. "While the Baywest development is a private initiative, the developers have reached agreement with the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and the SANRAL on a joint funding initiative which is based on proportional responsibility derived from various traffic impact analyses," Blows says.

"The NMBM is contributing approximately 15% of the budgeted costs of the road network upgrade. This upgrade will benefit current local residents by linking the suburbs of Sherwood with Rowallan Park via a new multi-lane interchange which will not only bridge the N2 but will provide much needed on and off ramps. These new N2 access and egress points will relieve the current traffic congestion problems currently being experienced in peak hours and is expected to stimulate growth in these suburbs."

Environment is protected

Despite the size of the project, engineers say the road design specifically leaves an area which is home to a rare species of frog and the sensitive cyclopia plant untouched, while it is also diverted around a sensitive rocky outcrop. Provision to accommodate the city's integrated public transport system has also been made. According to Aecom engineer on the project, Gerrie Albertyn, construction of the road network is specifically designed to protect environmentally sensitive areas.

Work has commenced on clearing the path for the roads. By the time Baywest Mall opens next March, the on and off ramps from the N2 will have been completed. Come September next year, Walker Drive will have been linked with Cape Road, says Albertyn. "There will be a bridge to the southern side of the N2 which will be built specifically to protect the environmentally sensitive cyclopia plant species, which are situated in a wetland area. There will also be another structure

built to elevate the road in order to protect a rare frog species."

Pedestrian-friendly routes

A bridge over the Baakens River would be built as part of the development. The routes will also be pedestrian-friendly and have cycle paths throughout, to accommodate non-motorised transport. "The Redhouse-Chelsea road has been on the cards since 2004 to alleviate the congestion in the area. It's anticipated that a lot of traffic will use the route and the N2 interchange," Albertyn says.

Michael Kaiser, SANRAL southern regions construction manager says there will be two environmental control officers, whose responsibility it will be to ensure the minimum negative impact of the construction on the environment. The more sensitive areas will be fenced off completely to prevent any encroachment into the areas.

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