

New rail link gets R900m funding

The Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) has allocated about R900-million for the Motherwell rail line over the next three financial years, Eastern Cape Transport MEC Weziwe Tikana said on Thursday, 18 December.



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The first phase of the R1.1-billion project will involve a new 7.8km railway line - with three new stations - connecting Motherwell with the existing passenger line at Swartkops. The line runs between Port Elizabeth's main station and Johannesburg.

The second phase will involve a loop of about 11km that will link Motherwell with Coega.

Long-term plans are to link the last station up with the Coega Industrial Development Zone.

Despite final ticket prices not being confirmed, the building of the railway line has been widely welcomed by Motherwell residents.

Prasa has allocated the funds from 2014-15 to 2016-17.

Tikana said Prasa was finalising the tender adjudication process.

"Prasa is expecting the detailed design phase to start at the beginning of next year," he said.

"The process should take between 12 to 15 months to complete. The construction and implementation phase will follow thereafter."

Prasa spokesman Moffet Mofokeng said earlier this year that the railway line was expected to transport between 20000 and 30000 passengers an hour in its first years of operation.

Once operational, about 150 fulltime jobs would be created.

The line is designed to cater for up to 60000 passengers in the peak periods between 5am and 8am as well as 4pm and 7pm, when it operates at full capacity. Mofokeng said construction would start as soon as the procurement process was completed and that was expected during the financial year.

Motherwell resident Thobeka Mvuli said despite ticket prices not being confirmed, she was looking forward to additional public transport in the area.

"This is great news. We pay R12 per taxi ride to town, so R24 for a return ride. The train ticket surely won't cost more than R10 a trip.

"It might sound like a small R2 difference but that change adds up and at the end of the week buys you an extra pack of potatoes for your family," Mvuli said.

Resident Bukhosi Makekane said the addition of the line was long overdue.

"Motherwell is huge. And the people living here are the men and women who fill factories and workshops in PE and Uitenhage.

"These people are not managers - they are working on the ground, and a lot of their money is spent on transport instead of on their families," Makekane said.

"The new railway will save a lot of money for a lot of people.

"It is about time the railway came to Motherwell because this township is as big as New Brighton and the other townships where the railway line is already running through."

Municipal spokesman Mthubanzi Mniki said that "this can only bring a positive spin-off for the city and its people.

"You must remember that Motherwell is one of the biggest townships in the country in terms of households and the population," Mniki said.

"Nelson Mandela Bay as an economic area is growing with new opportunities opening which, in turn, gives hope for job opportunities and business.

"This leads to people coming into the city from other areas. Motherwell is one of the townships where these people live. A significant number work in Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth.

"As part of the broader plans of the city to improve the public transport system to support the abovementioned, it becomes critical for the city to support and to be excited about such plans."

Prasa failed to respond to questions despite several telephone calls and e-mails over two days.

Source: Herald

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