

## Positive response to proposed N3 corridor upgrades: Sanral



**144 Majuba Road,  
Northriding AH,  
Roodepoort,  
Gauteng, RSA.**

**Tel: +27 11 462 2742  
Web: [www.bhubesi.co.za](http://www.bhubesi.co.za)  
Email: [info@bhubesi.co.za](mailto:info@bhubesi.co.za)  
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There has generally been positive response to the proposed N3 capacity improvements between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, following three days of public hearings.

The widening, and realignment in sections, of the 84km N3 Corridor between EB Cloete Interchange in Durban and Twickenham Road in Pietermaritzburg is being undertaken by the South African National Roads Agency (Sanral) because the N3 is presently operating near full capacity.

Ravi Ronny, Sanral Eastern Region design and construction manager, said the road improvements are subject to the provisions of the National Environmental Management Act, and require environmental authorisation from the National Department of Environmental Affairs).

He said an integral component of environmental assessment is public participation where interested and affected parties are encouraged to participate actively in proposed developments in which they have an interest or which may affect them.

The hearings at Cato Ridge, Camperdown, and Pietermaritzburg afforded the public the opportunity to learn about Sanral's proposals, to view graphic representations of what is proposed, to obtain further information and to engage directly with officials from Sanral, as well as the design engineers and the environmental assessment practitioner.

Ronny said according to information gathered by environmental consultants Acer (Africa), it is estimated that 150 interested and affected parties attended the information sharing sessions over three days.

"In general, the members of the public who attended are positive about the proposed improvements.

"Where people are directly affected in terms of their properties, they are obviously concerned.

"There are some properties that are seriously affected by the land acquisition that will be required and these will need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by Sanral's property division," said Ronny.

Other common complaints/concerns/objections related to noise during construction and from the increased traffic after improvements and construction disruptions.

The N3 Durban-Pietermaritzburg upgrade over the next six to eight years will provide for an additional two to three lanes per direction and substantial interchange reconfigurations to accommodate future traffic growth and improve safety.

Widening will be accommodated as far as possible within the existing median and road reserve, but additional land will be need to be acquired in some areas.

The project will involve modification of existing bridges, crossroads and drainage, construction of some new infrastructure and demolition of redundant structures.

Realignment/relocation of services in the existing road reserve will also be undertaken.

Ronny said the N3 Corridor is essential if one of government's strategic integrated projects linking the Port of Durban with Gauteng, South Africa's economic heartland, is to succeed.

If the upgrades do not go ahead, it is estimated that users of the N3 will continue to suffer losses of nearly R800 million a year due to accidents and time delays. R775 million can be attributed to time delays and between R250 000 and R295 000 per hour to accidents and road closures due to accidents. These estimates are already five years old.

Ronny said the N3 carries in excess of 40 000 vehicles per day around Pietermaritzburg and consists of a mix of urban commuter traffic, long distance traffic and substantial heavy vehicles, with some sections in excess of 25% heavy vehicles.

"In excess of 75 million tons of freight per annum are carried on the N3 corridor, with approximately 9 000 heavy vehicles using the national road per day.

"Durban is by far South Africa's busiest port with over 80% of goods moving along this corridor by road.

"Therefore, the need to consider the best economic solutions to ensure the seamless flow of freight is very important to this corridor," said Ronny, adding any blockage on the N3 causing its closure was tantamount to a national crisis.

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