



News Release



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Commission Ceremony of Japanese Grant Aid Project to Improve Makuti–Chirundu Section of North–South Corridor

Today the Commission Ceremony of a Japanese Grant Aid Project to improve the Makuti-Chirundu section of the North-South Corridor was held. The Government of Japan extended Grant Aid of approximately USD 21 million (2.288 billion yen) to the Government of Zimbabwe for this road construction project to improve steep gradients on this section of the North–South Corridor, with the construction commencing in August 2019. This project was specifically mentioned as an important project for Zimbabwe’s economic development in the Joint Statement signed by the two countries in March 2016.

This very steep section of road descending the Zambezi escarpment is used by a large volume of traffic, including heavy trucks transporting goods across the border at Chirundu to and from Zambia and beyond, as well as visitors on their way to and from tourist attractions such as Mana Pools National Park. It was notorious for its steep gradients and sharp hairpin bends making it difficult for heavy vehicles to manoeuvre and for small passenger vehicles to overtake. There was a high accident rate and in 2016 a total of 110 accidents were recorded along this stretch of highway.

The project was implemented by the Department of Roads in the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development under supervision by Japanese highway engineers. Through this project, hill-climbing lanes have been constructed and the horizontal and/or vertical alignment improved for a distance of 6.5 km. This improvement in the sharp bends has contributed greatly to a smooth and safe flow of traffic. In addition, hill-climbing lanes now allow small passenger vehicles to overtake the slower moving heavy vehicles. The safer design of this section of road means that the number of accidents is expected to decrease to under 20 incidents per year. The new road will also allow the transportation of a greater volume of goods along the North–South Corridor, thereby contributing to SADC regional development.

Furthermore, the Japanese engineers have shared with their Zimbabwean counterparts their experience and the latest expertise gained from highway construction in Japan’s mountainous terrain. Over 250 road workers and other staff were employed. It is hoped that this project will serve as a model for the improvement of other steep sections of highway in the region.

Concerning the environmental impacts of this new road construction, the project was implemented according to strict Japanese and EMA environmental guidelines so that environmental impacts were minimised. This was also ensured through use of the latest technology in road construction.

Also along the North–South Corridor, Japan previously supported the construction of the New Chirundu Bridge from 1998–2002, as well as the Chirundu One-Stop Border Post, a first in Africa, which was opened in 2009. Japanese grants are non-reimbursable funds provided to a recipient country to purchase products and/or services for its economic and social development.

With the AU forecasting that the North-South Corridor will become the busiest transport corridor in Africa by 2040, the Government of Japan has decided to conduct a preparatory survey for the second phase of the Project for Road Improvement of the Northern Part of the North-South Corridor. Given Zimbabwe’s location at the centre of SADC and the importance of regional connectivity, Japan will continue to support the country to become a major player in the sustainable economic development of the region.



The ribbon-cutting to open the new road



Ambassador Speech



Construction of the improved road section



Part of the completed new road section