



Media Release

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UPDATE ON SWAZILAND RAIL LINK (SRL) PROJECT

The Swaziland Rail Link project team has spearheaded the project to reach significant milestones on its growth path. This is a joint effort between Transnet Freight Rail and Swaziland Railway. The project has successfully completed the FEL3, which was the feasibility phase. Early works are currently underway, and this involves graves relocation, acquisition of servitudes and the resettlement planning. The feasibility study report received a green light to proceed to the next phase.

The project is now at the stage of exploring and evaluating the various funding options at the same time looking for customers and potential customers to ensure the viability of the project.

This Inter-Railway initiative between Transnet Freight Rail (Republic of South Africa) and Swaziland Railway entails the construction of a 150km long line from Lothair to Sidvokodvo, with 50km in South Africa and 100km in Swaziland. The project also includes the revamping of adjacent existing lines to align and provide support to the new link.

The project's primary objective is to **design a rail connection between Lothair and the Komatipoort –Richards Bay railway route and to provide a viable General Freight diversionary route to remove traffic from the Coal line freeing up 200 wagon Coal line slots for Export Coal.** The target is to accommodate up to 26 tons/axle, 2.5km long/200 wagons trains and provide capacity for 12 trains each way per day, in line with infrastructure interventions. This will result in a dedicated General Freight Business Corridor for Transnet, while providing necessary additional capacity for Swaziland Railway. **In addition the new link will enable road to rail migration.**

This growth adds to the current capacity of 12 trains of 81 wagons per day each way on the current Swaziland Railway Komatipoort-Golela Line, thereby doubling the traffic volumes. Consequently, the Swaziland Rail Link project will aid added capacity on general freight business, decongesting the Coal line and unlocking capacity on the eastern mainline and the North South Corridor.

The line has been designed to carry a **maximum of 200** General Freight wagons and will be operated as a seamless service without stopping at the border.

This project has already created opportunities on both sides of the border. Approximately 3,000 and 6,500 jobs are projected in South Africa and Swaziland respectively during construction of the SRL railway line. Business opportunities to the value of R0.894 billion in South Africa and R1.7 billion in Swaziland, are anticipated. Many more indirect job opportunities will be formed by the project.

The detailed planning phase is underway and comprises of; land acquisition, graves relocation, resettlement planning activities and completion of the engineering designs.

Recent developments include the following on the Swaziland side:

- The highlights of the feasibility report (FEL3) show that 500 graves will be relocated and 235 households will be resettled in Swaziland. To date all 500 graves have been relocated.
- **Negotiations for acquisition of 122 hectares out of the 712 hectares of land required are at an advanced stage.**
- A structure at grass roots level comprising of Project Affected People (PAPs) is in place to address all resettlement issues. A participatory process **in the grave relocation was applied in line with relevant guidelines.**
- A robust consultative process with traditional authorities and other stakeholders like the Regional Administrator, Chiefs and Government ministries is ongoing.
- Studies of upgrades are in progress for Sidvokodvo – Phuzumoya – Golela.
- The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland has demonstrated its commitment by the **funding of the early works.**

Compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements lies at the core of the entire project.

Progress on the South African side;

- The Socio Economic Assessment in the Mpumalanga area to determine the level of skills available, types of small businesses available to boost local employment and business opportunities.
- The purchasing of 506 hectares of land has been approved and negotiations with the land owners are being finalised in order to purchase the impacted land.
- Furthermore, approval for exhumation and relocation of over 120 affected graves has also been obtained. The affected families have been identified and engaged in this process.
- The plans to resettle the affected households are also in progress.
- The feasibility studies of the Greenfields are complete and the authorities in South Africa and Swaziland have granted both teams the necessary environmental permits.
- Feasibility studies of the existing lines that need to be upgraded, that is, Ermelo to Lothair as well as Golela to Nseshe are also in progress.
- Engagements are being conducted on a continuous basis with the existing customers and potential customers to ensure maximum viability and sustainability.

Acknowledgements

Special gratitude is extended to His Majesty's Government and the Government of South Africa for their continued support, the Manzini Regional Administrator for always creating time for the project, Traditional Leaders, affected Communities for their unwavering support. Last but not least the zealous and positive role that the media has played thus far in promoting the project, has not gone unnoticed.

Editor's Notes:

- The Swaziland Rail Link project (SRL) is a seamless project running across two countries, South Africa and Swaziland. The project is collaboration between two companies, namely, Swaziland Railways (from Swaziland) and Transnet Freight Rail (from South Africa). The project entails the construction of a 150 kilometre new railway line from Lothair in South Africa to Sidvokodvo in Swaziland and revamping two existing lines, the first from Ermelo to Lothair in South Africa and the other one from Sidvokodvo in Swaziland to Richards Bay in South Africa.
- The SRL will also ensure business continuity in cases of shutdowns and line closure.
- The Swaziland Rail Link will enhance the capacity of the eastern seaboard GFB system
- The line has been designed to carry a maximum of 200 General Freight wagons and will be operated as a seamless service.

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