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News

World-class highway amenities: The NHAI seeks to bring in international knowledge to develop wayside facilities alongside national highways

mypunepulse.com

June 18, 2024

Now, businesses interested in creating wayside amenities on national highways will be asked to submit separate bids to NHAI. The intention behind this choice is to draw in international experience in developing these kinds of facilities.

By KhushiMaheshwari

“World-class” highway amenities: A new approach is being explored with the goal of bringing international experience to the development of wayside amenities on national highways. The procedure of creating wayside amenities alongside new highways and expressways will be altered, according to a decision made by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). Road contractors and concessionaires will no longer be in charge of constructing these amenities.

NHAI will now request independent proposals from businesses looking to build these facilities. The goal of this move, according to an ET article, is to draw in international experience in developing roadside amenities (WSAs) in India. In order to increase return on investment and enhance the experience of highway users, NHAI seeks to promote creative designs and products. Approximately 1,000 WSAs are to be established over the next five years, with a facility located every 50 kilometers along national highways, according to the ministry of road transport and highways.

Of these, eight hundred will be created through public-private partnership, or PPP. For a period of 15 to 30 years, the private player will be in charge of the facility’s development, operation, and maintenance; the NHAI will supply the land, the required permits, and monitoring. Only 198 WSAs have been granted thus far, and 162 are awaiting a bid. According to the government, these WSAs will offer substantial potential to developers, retailers, operators, and investors, with expected returns of between 15 and 30 percent on an average capital investment of Rs 1 to 10 crore.

Fuel stations, EV charging stations, food courts, restaurants, dhabas, convenience stores, first aid or medical rooms (including childcare rooms), areas set aside for showcasing local artisans, drone landing facilities, and even helipads at larger sites are among the amenities that will be developed at each WSA.

WSA development, administration, and upkeep were once the duties of concessionaires or highway contractors in addition to their principal duties of building new roads. On June 11, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHAI) released guidelines that describe the process for removing wayside amenity construction from the purview of road contractors working under different civil work modes, including build-operate-transfer (BOT), hybrid annuity mode (HAM), and engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC).

JagannarayanPadmanabhan, senior director and global head of consulting at Crisil Market Intelligence and Analytics, suggested that segregating the works of road construction and wayside amenities would help in focusing more on the latter. He mentioned that this approach could also result in greater customization and might attract interest from specialized players such as oil marketing companies and hospitality sector players.

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NHAI withdraws Rs 957-crore Southern Bypass project

The Financial Express,

June 18, 2024

Big blow of infrastructure development as authorities fail to take possession of land, disburse

In a major blow to the infrastructure development, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has withdrawn the approval granted to construct the much-awaited 25.24-km-long Southern Ludhiana Bypass for want of land, officials have confirmed.

Aimed to decongest city roads

- While the physical possession of almost 100 hectares of acquired land has already been taken over and handed over to the NHAI by the district administration, the proceedings to complete acquisition for the remaining 80.58 hectares of land, which constitutes 44.77 per cent of the total land requirement, could not be completed
- This big ticket infrastructure development project was planned to decongest the busy internal and external arteries of the industrial and business hub of the North

Reason: The physical possession of the land acquired for the project could not be obtained and even the approved compensation amount could not be disbursed even over two years after the big ticket project was approved on June 2, 2022. Earlier, the construction company, who was selected and awarded the work, had refused to undertake the work and had left the project.

The development assumes significance as this six-lane Greenfield highway project to be built at the cost of Rs 956.94 crore had been hanging fire for the past over two years due to the non-availability of land following the stiff resistance by the landowners to part away with their landholdings under acquisition, officials have said.

While the physical possession of almost 100 hectares of acquired land has already been taken over and handed over to the NHAI by the district administration, the proceedings to complete acquisition for the remaining 80.58 hectares of land, which constitutes 44.77 per cent of the total land requirement, could not be completed.

While the district administration has claimed that the physical possession of 80 per cent of the requisite land had already been handed over to the NHAI/ contractor, which was mandatory to begin the construction work, the NHAI blamed that there was an inordinate delay in handing over the possession of the land.

The Rajya Sabha MP from Ludhiana, Sanjeev Arora, told The Tribune, on Saturday that the NHAI has withdrawn the letter of approval (LOA) granted for the project, citing the delay in handing over the possession of the land as the main reason.

He was briefed by the NHAI that only Rs 198.42 crore of the total Rs 323.06 crore compensation amount declared for land acquisition was disbursed and the physical possession of 19.74-km of the total 25.24-km land required for the project was obtained so far.



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“The disbursement and physical possession of land needs to be expedited by the District Revenue Officer (DRO) and the land in Rajgarh village needs to be handed over, which was taking a long time,” the NHAI said.

However, the DRO Gurjinder Singh said physical possession of over 80 per cent of the acquired land had already been handed over to the NHAI/ contractor, which even failed to sustain the same.

“The district administration, led by the Deputy Commissioner, has been making all out efforts to resolve the pending issues pertaining to the project at the earliest,” he claimed.

Taking up the matter, the MP called on the NHAI Chief General Manager (CGM) in New Delhi recently and impressed upon him to take immediate requisite steps to restore the project.

“I have been assured that the NHAI will take up the issue on priority to reconsider withdrawal of LOA,” Arora said.

Besides Ceigall India Limited with the lowest bid quoted price of Rs 702 crore, Varindera Constructions Rs 768 crore, Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Rs 811 crore and GR Infraprojects had quoted the bid price of Rs 851 crore.

“I have urged the NHAI top brass to do the needful for restoring the project at the earliest as 80 per cent of total land required for the project has already been handed over,” he said, while adding that the process to take over the remaining land will also be completed shortly.

To get it restored: MP

“I would impress upon the highway authority to restore the project at the earliest and ensure that the entire land required is made available without any further delay. Besides increased road landscaping and safety features, the project was planned to enhance connectivity between rural and urban areas,” Sanjeev Arora, Rajya Sabha MP.

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Over 800 km of highway stretches bid out

The Financial Express,
June 18, 2024

NHAI gets aggressive on ToT

The investor response to earlier rounds of monetisation through ToT has led to NHAI planning to put three bundles of highways on block every quarter.

In its first attempt at monetisation through Toll Operate Transfer (ToT) mode this financial year, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has invited bids for three bundles of highways at one go as against two bundles in earlier rounds .

The investor response to earlier rounds of monetisation through ToT has led to NHAI planning to put three bundles of highways on block every quarter.



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The highway builder has invited bids for monetising 801.7 km of national highways through Toll Operate Transfer (ToT) mode in the first round.

The highways have been grouped together in three bundles and are in states of Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha. In ToT bundle 17 Kanpur-Lucknow-Ayodhya section and Ayodhya-Gorakhpur section of highways in Uttar Pradesh totalling 333.4 km are on offer.

In Bundle 18 Chandikhol-Bhadrak and Panikholi – Rimuli sections on two highways in Odisha of total length of 283.8 km are on offer. In Bundle 19 Trichy – Thanjavur and Madurai – Tuticorin sections of highways of total length of 184.5 km in Tamil Nadu are open for bidding.

Last year for bundles 11, 12, 13 and 14 bids had come from the likes of KKR-backed Highways Infrastructure Trust, Cube Highways, IRB Infrastructure Trust, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority-backed funds, National Investment and Infrastructure Trust (NIIF) and Adani Group. Around Rs 15,968 was raised through transfer of these bundles to outside investors.

Under ToT the investors get the right to collect toll on highways for 20 years after making an upfront payment to NHAI, the owner. According to analysts on an average the realisation from monetisation of every kilometre of highway is around Rs 22 crore. The amount, however, varies wildly depending on the traffic density and the user base- whether it is used more by personal vehicles or commercial vehicles.

Bidding process for Bundle 15 and Bundle 16 is in progress. These bundles have three highway stretches 375 km long in the states of Telangana and Tamil Nadu.

The aggression on ToT comes as NHAI chases the Rs 54,000 crore target for monetisation this financial year, which is much higher than Rs 40,227 achieved last year. Of the FY 25 target, Rs 8,000 will come from project based financing and Rs 46,000 crore from ToT and Infrastructure Investment Trust. National Highways Infrastructure Trust (NHIT) has already said that its share will be Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 crore in this year's monetisation plan.

The highway builder has identified 33 highway stretches of 2741 km that will be offered in the monetisation drive.

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NHAI to begin work on J&K's Chattergala tunnel: NitinGadkari

Express News Service,
June 18, 2024

NHAI will now carry out the construction of the tunnel as well as the new national highway from Kathua'sLakhanpur.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will begin work on the Rs 4,000-crore Chattergala tunnel at the earliest to ensure all-weather road connectivity between Kathua and Doda districts of Jammu and Kashmir, said Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways NitinGadkari in Srinagar on Monday.

Union Minister of State Jitendera Singh, who accompanied Gadkari, said the proposal for the Chattergala tunnel was initiated six years ago and a detailed project report was also prepared by the



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Border Roads Organisation agency Beacons. Work on it could not be undertaken due to lack of funds, he said.

NHAI will now carry out the construction of the tunnel as well as the new national highway from Kathua'sLakhanpur, which will pass through the tourist spots of Basohli and Bani to Bhaderwah and Doda, Singh said.

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Narela to benefit from new metro extension linking Delhi, UP, Haryana

The Economic Times,

June 18, 2024

Synopsis

The Union Finance Ministry has approved the 26-km Rithala-Narela-Kundli Delhi Metro corridor, awaiting final Cabinet approval. This Rs 6,231 crore project will enhance connectivity among Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Haryana, transforming the Narela sub-city. Funding is shared between the central and state governments, with significant contributions from the DDA and loans. The corridor, with 21 stations, will be a boon for Narela and Rohini sub-cities, improving access to key institutions and promoting regional development. Completion is expected in four years, with daily ridership projected to grow significantly by 2055.

The Public Investment Board of the Union Finance Ministry has cleared the proposal for the 26-km Rithala-Narela-Kundli Delhi Metro corridor. This extension of the existing Red Line now awaits final approval from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs. The new corridor will enhance inter-state connectivity among Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, and Haryana and significantly transform the Narela sub-city.

Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena played a key role in advocating for this project, frequently discussing the metro corridor with the central government. The Rithala-Narela-Kundli corridor, estimated to cost Rs 6,231 crore, includes Rs 5,685 crore for the Delhi portion and Rs 545.8 crore for the Haryana portion.

Funding for the project will be divided between the central and state governments. For the Delhi portion, the central government will cover 40% of the cost, with the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) contributing Rs 1,000 crore. The remaining costs will be funded through bilateral or multilateral loans (37.5%) and the Delhi government (20%). For the Haryana portion, 80% of the funding will come from the state government, with the central government providing the remaining 20%.

Infrastructure and Connectivity

The corridor, which will feature 21 stations, is expected to be completed in four years once sanctioned. It aims to significantly improve connectivity in the Narela-Bawana-Alipur areas, promoting infrastructure growth and development in these regions. Additionally, the corridor will address the long-standing requirements of the Rohini sub-city.

Previous Approvals and Current Status



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In March, the Lajpat Nagar-Saket G Block and Inderlok-Indraprastha corridors, extensions of the Golden and Green lines respectively, were approved as part of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's (DMRC) Phase IV expansion. However, the Rithala-Narela-Kundli corridor had been awaiting approval. DMRC is currently working on 65 km of three priority Phase IV corridors: Janakpuri West-RK Ashram, Majlis Park-Maujpur, and Aerocity-Tughlaqabad.

Broader Connectivity

Delhi Metro continues to extend its network to neighboring regions including Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Gurgaon, and Bahadurgarh. The inclusion of Kundli in Haryana will further enhance this connectivity. The new corridor is expected to have a daily ridership of 1.3 lakh by 2028 and 3.8 lakh by 2055.

Impact on Narela Sub-City

The construction of this metro line is poised to significantly benefit the Narela sub-city. The DDA is developing an education hub in the area with campuses of seven universities and institutions, a multi-modal logistics park, corporate offices, IT-ITeS parks, an AIIMS, and a medical campus. The metro corridor will provide essential connectivity to these institutions and housing colonies.

Benefits for Rohini Sub-City

The Rohini sub-city will also gain from improved metro connectivity. Key locations such as the heliport at Sector-36, Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre, Ambience Mall, SwarnJayanti Park, the sports complex in Sector-14, Rohini District Courts Complex, and the Forensic Science Laboratory will all benefit from the new metro line.

Key Stations

Main stations on the new line will include sectors of Rohini, villages like Barwala, Sanoth, New Sanoth, and Narela JJ Colony, two stations in the industrial area at Bawana, and five stations in the Narela area, including AnaajMandi, DDA sports complex, Narela village, Depot station, and Narela Sector-5.

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Navi Mumbai Airport: 70 Per Cent Construction Complete, To Be Operational In March 2025

Swarajya,
June 18, 2024

The Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) will be operational by March 2025, according to Murlidhar Mohol, Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation.

Mohol stated that approximately 70 per cent of the construction at NMIA, initially slated for completion by December 2024, is already finished. The remaining 30 per cent is expected to be completed by March 2025.



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The Navi Mumbai International Airport, spanning an area of 1,160 acres, the airport project comes with a total estimated cost of Rs 16,700 crore. It will be equipped with two runways positioned 1.55 kilometres apart from each other.

NMIA, which will be the second airport in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), will address the capacity constraints at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport.

The new airport would shake up the demand-supply dynamics by adding 40 per cent more passenger handling capacity overnight to the MMR region. Conceived in 1999, the work of Navi Mumbai Airport started in 2017.

Pune Airport Expansion Plans

During his first visit to his constituency in Pune since taking office, Mohol also discussed the expansion plans for Pune airport. These plans include modifications to accommodate wide-body aircraft, which will significantly enhance international connectivity from Pune, reports Financial Express.

Mohol met with officials from the Airports Authority of India (AAI) to review the expansion plans and address issues delaying the opening of a new terminal at Pune Airport.

Mohol revealed that the runway at Pune airport, currently capable of handling only Type C aircraft, will be expanded to allow operations for Type B and D aircraft. The expansion requires the acquisition of 35 acres, including both defence and privately owned land.

The newly constructed terminal building at Pune airport, costing Rs 475 crore, is complete but not yet operational due to a shortage of security personnel and pending regulatory clearance from the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security.

Additionally, Mohol announced that the Director General of Civil Aviation has approved the Purandar site for Pune's new greenfield international airport. With all technical clearances in place, the land acquisition process for the Purandar airport will commence shortly.

These developments are expected to significantly improve air travel infrastructure and connectivity in Maharashtra.

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India-Sri Lanka Land Connectivity Feasibility Study Almost Complete

Swarajya,
June 18, 2024

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe announced that the feasibility study for establishing land connectivity with India is nearing completion.

During his visit to the northeastern district of Mannar to inspect development projects, Wickremesinghe confirmed that the preliminary work for the study has been completed and the final phase is underway.



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Creating land connectivity across the Palk Strait, which is as narrow as 25 kilometres (15 miles) at certain points, would provide India with access to the crucial ports of Trincomalee and Colombo. This initiative aims to fortify the "millennia-old relationship" between the two neighbouring countries.

The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, serves as a rich fishing ground for both countries. Incidents of fishermen from both nations being arrested for inadvertently trespassing into each other's waters are common.

This proposal, along with the prospect of a power grid connection between Sri Lanka and India, is expected to be a key topic of discussion during the visit of Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to Sri Lanka this week. Wickremesinghe also indicated that discussions would include a commercial venture to sell excess renewable energy from Sri Lanka to India.

The Sri Lankan foreign ministry announced that Jaishankar is scheduled to arrive in Colombo on 20 June. However, there has been no official confirmation from India's Ministry of External Affairs regarding the visit. If confirmed, this would mark Jaishankar's first official stand-alone visit abroad since his appointment as External Affairs Minister in the newly formed government earlier this month.

During Jaishankar's visit, discussions are expected to cover all Indian projects in Sri Lanka, including the Adani Group's wind power project in Mannar and the development of an industrial zone in the eastern port district of Trincomalee, reports Indian Express.

Additionally, Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda stated that Sri Lanka plans to raise the issue of illegal fishing in its waters by Indian fishermen, including the practice of bottom trawling.

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Bangkok-Beijing High-Speed Rail: Thailand To Test Bangkok-Vientiane Train Service

PTI,

June 18, 2024

In a significant step towards establishing train travel between Thailand's Bangkok and China's Beijing, Thailand will conduct a trial rail service between Bangkok and Laos' Vientiane on 13 and 14 July. This initiative lays the groundwork for an extensive rail network stretching from Bangkok to Beijing.

The new service aims to integrate Thailand with the existing Laos-China rail network, a key component of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative.

With the inauguration of the Thailand-Laos rail link, trains from Bangkok will now be able to make stops in Vientiane and Kunming, southern China. From Kunming, travellers can continue their journey on a semi-high-speed service to Beijing.

Given the mountainous terrain and the distance involved, the approximately 2,000-mile (3,218-kilometre) journey will take nearly a full day, compared to about five hours by non-stop flight.



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The high-speed train currently operating between China and Laos has already reduced the transportation time for Thai goods to Kunming from two days to just 15 hours, highlighting the potential for efficient trade routes.

EkaratSriarayanphong, an official at the SRT, stated that this new rail link will enhance transportation connectivity between Thailand, Laos, and China, promoting economic and tourism ties across the region, according to a report by Hindustan Times.

Improving rail connectivity with China, Thailand's primary trade partner, is seen as a strategic move to boost its economic growth. Last year, Thailand exported almost \$32 billion worth of goods to China, including fruit and rubber products. In contrast, imports from China totalled \$65.3 billion, dominated by electric equipment and machinery.

The countries are also strengthening tourism ties, having removed tourist visa requirements. Chinese tourists can now stay in Thailand for up to 60 days, while Thai tourists can stay in China for 30 days.

Plans are in place to complete a high-speed rail system connecting Thailand to China through Laos by 2028, a development expected to further enhance tourism and trade between the nations.

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