

Transnet's Postmasburg Link Line

THE NEW 32 KM Postmasburg link line enables the expansion of iron ore supply from the Northern Cape areas, and forms part of Transnet's commitment to the expansion of rail and port capacity along the 861 km Sishen-Saldanha iron ore export corridor. The Postmasburg link line,



The Postmasburg link line under construction



The first train on the new Postmasburg link line

which serves the new Sishen South mine, is the first new line of this length to be completed by Transnet in 32 years.

The construction of the line forms part of Phase 1C of the Sishen-Saldanha corridor expansion programme. The construction included 948 000 m³ of earthworks; road-over-rail bridges; 2 816 metres of culverts/pipes; the laying of 50 550 concrete sleepers, 120 000 tons of ballast and 4 000 tons of rail; and the erection of 670 overhead track equipment masts, with 32 km of catenary and earth wire.

A significant milestone was achieved in the month of November 2011 when the first 114-wagon train travelled on the newly established line. Construction of the line started in May 2010 and was completed in November of the following year. Other components that formed part of the rail capacity expansion programme included an increase in rolling stock (wagons and locomotives), upgrading of railway electrical infrastructure, construction of additional train-passing loops, and the introduction into service of longer trains (342 wagons at 100 tons/wagon payload).

The successful completion of the Postmasburg link line means that 9 million tons per annum of the total 60 mpta

(million tons per annum) expansion will be transported along the new line.

The original, single-track Sishen-Saldanha line was opened in 1976 for heavy iron ore trains. Since then a number of expansions have taken place, with the most recently completed expansion taking the line capacity to 60 mpta.

The completed phases have resulted in an additional 1.5 km being added to each of the existing crossing loops. The new infrastructure will accommodate additional locomotives deployed at various positions within the train sets, controlled through radio distributed power technology, hauling up to 342 wagons. These are the longest operational trains in the world. Each train can now consist of an additional 126 wagons, which, at 100 tons per wagon, has increased the capacity by 12 600 tons per trip.

A joint venture by Hatch, Mott MacDonald and Goba (HMG) managed the construction of the project.

► INFO

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The longest operational trains in the world carry iron ore from Sishen to Saldanha

