



Project Signing: Government of India and World Bank Sign \$216 Million Agreement for making road travel in Kerala faster and safer

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The project will pass through 87 villages in 8 districts
The Government of India and the World Bank today signed a \$216 million loan for the Kerala State Transport Project II (KSTP II) to support the government of Kerala in improving the condition, traffic flow and safety of its road network.
The Project will build on the achievements of Kerala State Transport Project I (KSTP I), which helped the state upgrade 254 km of roads, and improve and maintain a further 1150 km of roads. Travel time on these roads has reduced by 20% and road user surveys show an increased level of satisfaction with the roads provided.
However, the states economic development remains constrained by a network of 152,000 km that is three times as dense as the national average - and is characterized by poor quality and suboptimal alignment. Of the 4,340 km of state highways, around 70% is still single laned, and 54% in poor condition. Road safety is also a major challenge on many of Keralas roads and more than 4,000 people die in road accidents every year, with pedestrians and riders of two-wheelers being disproportionately affected.
For the government, improving infrastructure, including road transport, is key to sustaining growth. This loan from the World Bank, will help the Government of Kerala to not only upgrade its state highways but also strengthen its road safety management system, said Nilaya Mitash, joint secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.
The KSTP II project approved today has three key components - upgrading 363 km of strategically important state highways; strengthening road safety management systems; and improving the networks financial viability and capacity to deliver road infrastructure and services that are responsive to the needs of users.
"Kerala has the highest human development outcomes in the country and is making impressive economic progress. However, the state needs to improve its road infrastructure for inclusive growth. This, along with attention to road safety, can spur investments, create new jobs and boost agriculture, while improving citizens access to markets, healthcare and education, said Onno Ruhl, World Bank country director for India.
The agreement for the Kerala State Transport Project II was signed by Nilaya Mitash, joint secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of the government of India; T O Sooraj, secretary, Public Works Department on behalf of the government of Kerala; and Onno Ruhl, country director India, on behalf of the World Bank.
Recognizing that road safety is a critical issue in the country today, KSTP II will build on the work done under the previous project and continue to support the Road Safety Authority - the first of its kind in India - particularly in improving its data collection abilities as well as its monitoring and evaluation framework. It will include an 80 km safe corridor demonstration project connecting Trivandrum and Kochi which will focus on measures to improve the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorized two-wheelers. The safe corridor will benefit from a multi-sectoral approach with better engineering, enforcement, health care and community awareness.
This will enhance the states ability to systematically identify, analyze, develop and prioritize critical road safety measures, which will benefit all road users. The KSTP II project will pass through some 87 villages, covering eight districts with about 13.4 million people, of which more than 50% are women.
The first project had a number of institutional successes but there is also an unfinished agenda. The project will support the on-going modernization agenda of the Public Works Department through improved asset management, financial sustainability and road user focus. The project will also demonstrate best practice in road design and construction, traffic management to improve road safety and environmental protection measures, said Simon David Ellis, senior transport specialist and the projects task team leader.
The loan, from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a maturity of 18 years including a grace period of 5 years.
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