

# GEORGIA: NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR (KVESHETI-KOBI) ROAD PROJECT

## Frequently Asked Questions

Updated January 2019



## PROJECT RATIONALE

### Status of the Existing Road

#### 1. Why is construction of the Kvesheti-Kobi road necessary?

The existing 35-km road connecting Kvesheti and Kobi is unsafe, congested, and prone to avalanches. The existing road is inadequate for the volume of traffic it carries, which currently ranges between 3,000 and 4,000 vehicles per day (70% of cars and 30% of vans/buses/trucks). It has an inadequate horizontal and vertical alignment, climbing from 1,370m to 2,200m via a series of hairpin bends. It is difficult to maintain in winter, meaning it is closed for extended periods each year (an average of 44 days per year during 2012-2016). The existing road is also dangerous, with six deaths and 89 injuries recorded between 2012 and 2017. The new bypass road and tunnel connecting Kvesheti and Kobi will allow the increasing traffic to travel on it safely and will remain open all year.

#### 2. Will this new road make Georgia an international transit corridor?

The North-South Corridor is a vital transport and trade network that facilitates connections across the country, from Armenia to Russia, and beyond. It is crucial for the connectivity of international trade and is also essential for Georgia's global market access and socioeconomic development. The new road is a key component of this growing interconnected network.

### Benefits of the New Road

#### 3. How will the road benefit Georgia's economy?

Improving the North-South Road Corridor is a priority for Georgia. Slow travel times and high vehicle operating costs impact trade and local development, including tourism and agriculture. Traffic disruption is also a major impediment to meeting increasing transport demand and harnessing the tourism potential of the area.

#### 4. How will travel times and accidents be decreased?

The government's program to progressively improve the North-South corridor includes (i) constructing a 23-km two-lane bypass road between Kvesheti and Kobi, with an additional climbing lane for heavy goods vehicles along 70% of the bypass, to address impending capacity constraints; (ii) providing adequate safety features and improving the horizontal and vertical alignment to address safety deficiencies of the existing road; (iii) building well-designed tunnels that will enable safe and year-round two-way traffic.

#### 5. How will the area benefit from the new road?

Road closures during the winter months mean many communities in the area are cut off from economic and social services. In the Khada valley, villagers are snow-bound for up to four months a year meaning they have to evacuate the valley during those months or stay behind and endure potentially dangerous hardships throughout the winter. The new bypass road will provide year-round access for rural populations in the Khada valley, enabling them to access important economic and social services in all seasons. Other communities and tourist destinations along the Kvesheti-Kobi road will benefit from safer and more reliable road access.

## **6. How will the road and tunnel project affect people's livelihoods?**

The improvements made to the main road and local access roads will increase trade, boost tourism, enhance access to markets and social services for local communities and stimulate economic activities. In the short term, the bypass road will contribute to poverty reduction by providing job opportunities in road construction, operation, and the maintenance of transport infrastructure.

In addition, the project intends to support community development initiatives to enhance local livelihoods. These initiatives will be identified and implemented in close consultation with local communities and may include community-based ecotourism support as well as improved water/sanitation infrastructure. A gender analysis has been conducted and a Gender Action Plan is being developed to ensure women and girls in the area benefit from the project.

## **7. Will the new bypass road make driving in the area safer or more dangerous?**

The new road will be constructed to international standards in terms of geometric alignment, road lighting, pedestrian crossings, and road safety features thus making it significantly safer to drive. Furthermore, the separation of transit traffic, particularly by diverting heavy goods vehicles that currently pass through Gudauri and other populated areas, will significantly improve safety and also reduce disturbances.

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# **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

## **Project Status**

### **8. What is the current status of the project?**

The project's pre-feasibility study, feasibility study, detailed engineering design, and procurement documentation have been prepared under World Bank financing. The project's due diligence and safeguard documentation have been prepared under ADB and EBRD financing. The project is currently in its final stages of preparation.

### **9. When will construction begin?**

Construction of the bypass road including the Gudauri tunnel is expected to begin at the end of 2019.

### **10. Has a construction company been selected?**

The project includes two civil works contracts for the construction of the 9-km long Gudauri tunnel (Lot 1) and the 14-km long road section (Lot 2). No companies have been selected yet for Lot 1, while companies have been preselected for Lot 2.

### **11. How will the construction companies be selected?**

The Roads Department of Georgia will select construction companies through international competitive bidding in accordance with ADB Procurement Policy and Regulations. The companies that are selected will have had to prove that they are capable of meeting a wide range of technical specifications and financial requirements.

## **Project Scope**

### **12. How long is the proposed road and tunnel?**

The new bypass road is 23-km long, about 12-km shorter than the existing road. The two-lane (one-lane each way) asphalt road will have an additional climbing lane for heavy vehicles. The road will be constructed to 80 km/hour design speed with appropriate safety features. Tunnel work, built to European Union standards (EU Directive 2004/54/EC), will eliminate avalanche risks in key locations. The road includes five tunnels totaling about 11km. The longest tunnel is about 9km in length and will be the longest in Georgia.

**13. What tunneling method will be used?**

A tunnel boring machine will be used for construction of the main tunnel. Cut and cover and drill and blast methods will be used for construction of the main tunnel's emergency gallery and the four smaller tunnels.

**14. Will there be lighting as well as road crossings and underpasses?**

Yes. Road lighting and designated road crossings and underpasses are an integral part of the project design.

**15. Will the new road cut off access to smaller roads that lead to local houses?**

No. Access to smaller roads and properties will be maintained or improved where appropriate.

**16. What alternatives to the proposed route were examined? And why were they rejected?**

As part of the project feasibility study financed by the World Bank, a systematic comparison of project alternatives in terms of location, technology, design, and operation was undertaken. Each alternative was judged in terms of a range of potential impacts including feasibility of mitigation, capital and recurrent costs, suitability under local conditions, and residual impacts on the natural and social environment and on the area's cultural heritage.

**17. Will the Roads Department build new roads to connect nearby villages to the Kvesheti-Kobi section of road?**

This project is not just about the new bypass road and long tunnel. The project scope also includes new local roads and improvements of several existing local roads. These will connect villages and rural communities to provincial centers and beyond, meaning better access to bigger markets, better social services, and more economic opportunities.

**18. Are there footpaths on the road that people can use to walk to neighboring villages?**

The new road has been designed and will be built to conform to international standards (Trans-European North-South Motorway and EU Directive 2004/54/EC). As such, it will not be permitted to walk on the new highway. However, safe pedestrian crossings and footpaths will be provided alongside the road.

**19. Residents of Kvesheti village want the road to be built on the other side of the river. Is that possible?**

There are a number of technical and safety reasons why this is not possible. The main reason is that the slope on the other side of the river is difficult to stabilize, and if the road is constructed there, it would be prone to landslide risks.

**20. Are water, communications, and other critical infrastructure at risk of damage during construction?**

Part of the construction contractors' work is to identify all of the utilities that will potentially be affected and then work with the community, should any of the services need to be relocated or temporarily cut off, to ensure there is no lack of service to the community until normal services are restored.

**21. What will be done to avoid noise and vibrations during the construction process?**

The construction contractors will have to produce a Site Specific Environmental Management Plan and implement mitigation measures in relation to noise and vibration. The contractor will have to monitor that noise and vibration levels do not exceed agreed standards. Should that eventuate, the construction contractor will have to reduce noise and vibration impacts by using different equipment or working methods. Further, construction camps will be located at least 1km away from communities.

**22. Who is going to be responsible for maintaining the existing road?**

The Roads Department of Georgia will be responsible for maintaining the existing and new bypass road.

## **Project Financing**

**23. How much will this project cost?**

The total cost of the project is currently estimated at \$550 million.

#### **24. How is the project to be financed?**

The Government of Georgia has applied for financing from the ADB (\$350 million) and EBRD (\$60 million) toward the cost of the North-South Corridor (Kvesheti-Kobi) Road Project. The government will provide counterpart funding equivalent to \$140 million to cover taxes and duties, land acquisition and resettlement costs, financing charges, and other miscellaneous costs.

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## **PROJECT IMPACTS**

### **Environmental Impacts**

#### **25. There are many natural habitats in the project area and in the Kazbegi National Park. These include bird migratory corridors and mammal crossing points. Will these be protected?**

The project runs 200m beneath about 150m of the Kazbegi National Park and the proposed Emerald Network site. Mammal crossing points and bird migration corridors are among the many important natural habitats that have been studied by experts as part of project preparation and which are addressed in the Environmental Impact Assessment.

In terms of birds, the broad project area of Jvari contains a migratory flyway through which, at peak migration, more than 30,000 raptors pass each day. However, recent surveys indicate that the specific project area of the Khada valley is of lesser importance to birds compared to Jvari itself. In terms of mammals, six species—the Brown Bear, the Eurasian Lynx, the Eurasian Otter, the Chamois, the Tur and the Grey Wolf—are potentially present within the specific study area, but will roam widely in the Jvari and Kazbegi area. Other species of small mammals, reptiles and amphibians—including the Kazbegi Birch Mouse and Dinniks Viper—are also potentially present.

Meetings have been held with the following stakeholders to discuss biodiversity issues in the project area: The Georgian Centre for Biodiversity Conservation and Research; the Caucasus Nature Fund; the Ilia State University; Georgian Centre for the Conservation of Wildlife; and the Agency for Protected Areas. Prior to project construction, the Roads Department will implement a Biodiversity Action Plan that specifies actions to safeguard, protect, and enhance biodiversity in the area.

#### **26. Eco-tourism is very popular in the area. Will the project make the area less appealing to eco-tourists?**

The new road and tunnel will increase the accessibility and decrease the seasonality of the area. It will also improve the experiences and safety of visitors to the area, opening up destinations such as the Kazbegi National Park, spectacular valleys and picturesque villages to eco-tourists from around the world. In addition, the project is assessing options for activities to enhance community-based eco-tourism in the area.

#### **27. What is an Environmental Impact Assessment?**

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is an assessment of the environmental consequences (positive and negative) of a plan, policy, program, or actual projects prior to the decision to move forward with the proposed action. The draft EIA report (English) can be downloaded from: <https://www.adb.org/projects/documents/geo-51257-001-eia>.

#### **28. What is an Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report?**

An EIA Scoping Report considers the biological, social, economic and cultural impacts of a proposed activity, in this case the road and tunnel project. It also considers alternatives to the chosen project site and explains why the alternatives were not chosen. In addition to other important functions, the EIA Scoping Report serves as a roadmap for an EIA. Scoping Reports for EIAs are required under Georgian law.

#### **29. Does Georgia's new Strategic Environmental Protection Assessment procedure apply to the project?**

No. The procedure came into effect on 1 July 2018, by which time the EIA Scoping Report process for the project had already begun.

**30. What is going to happen to the spoil material generated by the project?**

The project will generate around 1.9 million cubic meters of inert spoil material that is surplus to the requirements of the project. This will be transported to permanent spoil disposal sites within the project area and these recommended sites, along with a spoil disposal management framework, have been included in the draft EIA. During the public consultations and focus group meetings, some local communities expressed interest in accommodating some of the spoil, assuming it is of appropriate quality, for filling and levelling land in their communities.

**31. Construction camps can damage the surrounding environment. Where will they be located and who will monitor them?**

Construction camp locations have yet to be determined and will be proposed by the construction contractors. However, recommendations for site selection and mitigation of impacts are specified in the draft EIA report. Construction camps will be located at least 1 kilometer from any residential property and 2 kilometers from ecologically sensitive areas. The construction contractors are required to produce a Construction Camp Management Plan to be approved by the Roads Department and monitored by the Construction Supervision Consultant.

**32. In the project zone there is a St. George Cross, a Soldiers' Monument, graveyards, and other important cultural monuments. Will these be affected by the construction?**

The Georgian National Agency of Heritage Protection has undertaken a review to identify and register cultural monuments and important archaeological sites. Georgian law states that it is forbidden to carry out construction closer than 300m from a protected site if the construction hinders a view or damages a monument. According to the project design, graves and shrines will not be affected. In fact, the plan calls for the construction of a protective wall around graves and shrines in order to prevent them from being damaged during construction. Given the rich cultural heritage of Georgia, particularly in the Khada Valley, all works that could potentially impact cultural heritage sites will be carried out in consultation with archeologists and cultural heritage monitors will be deployed on site in particularly sensitive locations. The contractor is required to conduct a pre-construction survey to document the condition of all cultural heritage sites that could potentially be affected.

## **Involuntary Resettlement**

**33. What is the policy regarding involuntary resettlement?**

The Government of Georgia is in the process of preparing a Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan (LARP) that identifies who will be affected by the project, estimates the economic impacts they will suffer, and determines how they will be compensated or have their incomes restored.

For the development of the project, it will be necessary to acquire about 240 land plots and houses located within (or in the immediate vicinity of) the footprint of the road, structures, and spoil areas. A LARP is being prepared by the government to address these issues. There may be cases where an affected person refuses to be resettled. In such cases, all efforts will be made to reach an agreement. In case an agreement cannot be reached, the provisions of eminent domain shall apply.

**34. What is eminent domain?**

If affected people do not agree with the amount of money they are being offered as compensation, then the only step forward for the Roads Department is the law of Eminent Domain, which is the forcible expropriation of property by the courts.

**35. Will homeowners be compensated if their houses are damaged during the construction process?**

Yes. The contractor is required to conduct a pre-construction survey to document the condition of potentially affected structures. Should a structure that has not been included in the Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan be damaged, compensation will be payable. People who are concerned that their property might be damaged during construction are encouraged to document the pre-construction condition of their structures, if possible.

**36. Some people in the area say they are having trouble registering their land. They believe their land is not being registered because it will raise its value and make it more difficult for the government to purchase. Is this true?**

The ADB and the Roads Department want all affected land to be registered and are committed to this being a transparent process. The ADB stands ready to assist the Roads Department in conducting the registration process and is hiring an international firm to conduct a due diligence check on the methodology being used by the Roads Department to assess the value of affected land. If affected people have questions or concerns about registering their land they should contact the Roads Department or the ADB Resident Mission office in Tblisi (see contact details section at the end of this document).

**37. How do I know if the project is going to affect my land?**

All affected people will be contacted formally by representatives from the Roads Department during the preparation of the Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan.

**38. What can I do if my land is not registered?**

If land is entitled to be registered, it is recommended that the registration process be undertaken as soon as possible. Contact the Roads Department resettlement team for assistance with land registration.

**39. If my parcel of land is not registered, what is going to happen?**

If it is possible to legally register the land, the registration process will be completed and the land will be compensated at market value. If the affected person is not legally entitled to register the land plot, market value cannot be paid, however other allowances and compensation will be payable, and all improvements made to the land will be compensated at replacement cost.

**40. What should people do if officials are not being helpful in resolving land registration issues?**

Any issues should be communicated to the Roads Department in the first instance. Affected persons may also contact ADB and/or EBRD.

**41. What happens if people's livelihoods are going to be negatively affected on a permanent basis?**

Loss of livelihood will be compensated by the project. Various allowances will be paid to affected persons, based on various criteria that will be explained in the project information brochures distributed during the preparation of the Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan (LARP). Full details will be provided in the final LARP, which will be disclosed in English on ADB's website and in Georgian on the Roads Department web site prior to implementation.

**42. How will compensation be calculated?**

This is being explained during Public Consultations and in the project information brochures distributed during the preparation of the Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan (LARP). Full details will be provided in the final LARP, which will be disclosed in English on ADB's website and in Georgian on Roads Department website prior to implementation.

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## **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

### **Consultations with Directly Affected Persons**

**43. What is being done to consult with people in the area who will be affected by the project?**

The Government of Georgia, ADB and the EBRD are committed to a robust and meaningful consultation and participation process involving project-affected people and other project stakeholders. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) has been prepared under EBRD financing which serves as a general framework for building and maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders throughout the entire project lifecycle.

As of January 2019, more than 20 public consultations and focus group discussions had been held with village residents as part of the project design process. In addition, several working group meetings have been held with representatives from environmental NGOs and academia. Issues raised and discussed include technical design options, environmental impacts, land acquisition and resettlement, gender concerns, and project planning and implementation. The public consultations and focus group discussions have provided the government and its partners with a greater understanding of the impacts the project will have on local communities. As a result, several significant design changes have been made to accommodate people's concerns.

The outcomes of the consultations are being documented and reflected in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan (LARP) and in the project's overall scope and design. Consultations will continue to be held as engagement is an ongoing activity throughout the life of the project.

#### **44. Have the public consultations had any effect on the design process?**

Yes, there are many instances where the views expressed at the public consultations have led to design changes and re-engineered solutions. For instance, (i) an underpass will be built in Kvesheti, and that is directly the result of a public consultation held there, (ii) and at the opening to the Gudauri tunnel in Tskere, consultation with the residents who live there year-round led to extending the cut and cover entrance (southern portal) by approximately 100 meters in order to maintain access to a nearby graveyard.

### **Information to the General Public**

#### **45. Are there mechanisms for people to make formal complaints about the project to the Georgian government, the ADB and/or the EBRD?**

Yes, there is a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) established by the project. The mechanism is explained in the EIA report and also in a leaflet that has been distributed to affected communities. People should address any complaints to the Grievance Redress Committee focal point: Shota Batsikadze, Representative of the Resettlement Division, Roads Department (Tel: 577 613 302 Email: Shota.batsikadze@georoad.ge). If the complaint is not able to be resolved at local level it may be elevated for consideration at the national level. Should the complainant be unsatisfied by the ruling made, the complaint may be submitted to a court of law. The complainant may also submit a complaint to ADB and/or EBRD.

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## **MORE INFORMATION:**

### **GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA**

#### **Executing Agency:**

Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia  
12 Khazbegi Street, 0160, Tbilisi, Georgia

#### **Implementing Agency:**

Roads Department of Georgia: <http://www.georoad.ge>

**Building Better Georgia:** <http://build.gov.ge/ge/projects>

#### **Contact Person:**

Levan Kupatashvili  
Deputy Chairman  
Roads Department of Georgia  
Info(@)georoad.ge

### **ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

#### **Project Website:**

<https://www.adb.org/projects/51257-001/main>

#### **Safeguard Policies and Documents:**

<https://www.adb.org/site/safeguards/main>

#### **Contact Person:**

Kamel Bouhmad  
Transport Specialist  
Transport and Communications Division  
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