

Huguenot Tunnel to get an upgrade

Following extensive research and planning, The South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL) has put together an operations plan for the much-needed upgrades to the Huguenot Tunnel. After 31 years of continuous and safe operation, the electrical and mechanical systems have neared its end of life, and are in need of replacement to ensure compliance to international safety standards.



Source: pixabay.com

At a stakeholder engagement session recently held in Worcester, SANRAL's regional leadership presented the operational requirements and time schedule of the upgrades to stakeholders from local and provincial government, the road freight industry, the agricultural sector and the local business community.

Off-peak closure

"In taking into account the travel patterns of road users, peak traffic times, the economic impact of a full-scale closure and detour routes, we have decided that commencing in September 2019, the tunnel would be closed to traffic, from 10pm to 6am, Monday to Thursday. This means that the tunnel will be fully open from Friday to Sunday, for all road users," said Randall Cable, SANRAL Western Region Manager.

The timing for the upgrades is scheduled for September, October and November 2019. Work will then be suspended during December and early January, to accommodate the increased volumes of holiday traffic that make use of the Huguenot Tunnel. Once the schools re-open in January work will resume and the off-peak closure will come into effect again.

During specific upgrades to the ventilation system, the tunnel will be completely closed to all heavy vehicles, for five days in each direction, i.e. 10 days in total. These dates will be confirmed closer to the time.

“We are particularly mindful of the effects that the off-peak closure may have on the long-distance freight community, and in particular the agricultural sector where farmers may be transporting goods to Cape Town for export purposes, under nighttime conditions, in line with harvesting times. Where transport schedules can be amended to ensure heavy vehicles pass through the tunnel before 10pm, we strongly advise this. However, where this is not possible, one of the various alternative routes should be taken. We are exploring further engagement with the agricultural sector in this regard,” continued Cable.

Alternative routes

Alternative routes include Paarl–DuToit’s Kloof Pass–Worcester (± 62 km), Paarl-Gouda-Tulbagh–Worcester (± 121 km) or Wellington-Tulbagh-Ceres (± 74 km.) Depending on origin and destination, the N2 Grabouw to Villiersdorp (41 km) is also an option.

“Where unforeseen changes to the schedule are necessitated, we will communicate these as soon as possible, to ensure that road users are fully informed of the work being carried out and the effects this may have on traffic flow,” concluded Cable.

Real-time and accurate Huguenot Tunnel closure information will be made available on www.i-traffic.co.za and the SANRAL website www.nra.co.za, to allow road users to plan their journeys accordingly. Various other social media platforms will also be used to convey real-time and accurate information to all stakeholders.

While SANRAL apologises for the inconvenience these upgrades may cause, the safety of every road user passing through the Huguenot Tunnel, is our prime objective.

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