

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) : Loop 7A, (between Loop 6 at Kanakies and Loop 7 at De Kop) on the Sishen – Saldanha Railway Line
Environmental Assessment in support of an application for exemption from certain of the provisions of the EIA Regulations of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT AND INVITATION TO COMMENT

Hierdie dokument is ook in Afrikaans beskikbaar.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to notify interested and affected parties of the proposed project at loop 7A (between Kanakies and De Kop), to obtain their comments and provide a way for the public to take part and add value to the environmental process.

Comment is invited on:

- Any physical, natural, social, economic or environmental issues of concern,
- The public participation or environmental process that is being followed,
- Any other comments, issues or suggestions relating to this application.

Your comments and input will help to focus the Environmental Study being prepared. The environmental study will be submitted to both the National as well as Provincial Environmental Authorities together with the proper application forms for approval.

Your comment is very important. Please fill in the response form and return it to the Consultants:

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BACKGROUND

Transnet is presently investing R65bn in transport infrastructure in order to reduce the cost of doing business in South Africa and improve transport efficiencies. Part of this process includes upgrading the iron ore export capacity of the Sishen – Saldanha railway line and improving its present operational efficiency. The positions of loops 6, 7 and 8, where up and downward trains cross each other, have long been the cause of problems in the smooth flow of train traffic on the line. It is now proposed to build a new loop numbered 7A which will even out the running time of trains in this section and allow more effective scheduling of the line as a whole, at current as well as the increased tonnages planned. New loop 7A lies near a position previously identified and approved for a crossing place.

WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT?

An Environmental Impact Assessment is a regulatory requirement of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMA) by which the environmental impacts of various listed activities are identified, studied and evaluated for significance within the natural and social environment concerned. This is to allow the Authorities to make an informed decision whether to allow the project to proceed and what measures must be put in place to properly manage and reduce its possible environmental impact.

MOTIVATION FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The Iron Ore Line runs for 861km between the major mines at Sishen in the Northern Cape and the Port of Saldanha on the West Coast. The line has loops or “unmanned stations” at 19 places along the line where trains from different directions cross and pass each other.

The line now carries iron ore at 32 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) while creased capacity well beyond the authorised 41MTPA is being investigated. Traffic could increase to 93MTPA

Loops are generally spaced approximately 45km apart. For various reasons, mainly related to steep gradients and land form, Loop 7 (De Kop) is only 34.7km from Loop 8 (Sous) to the north but 63km from Loop 6 (Kanakies) to the South. This difference in distance and time taken for trains to travel between these three loops disrupts the scheduling for the whole line.

It is now planned to build a new loop between 316km and 324km, returning it to a position planned and approved in 2000, which will reduce the distance to an extended loop 6 to 41km. This will even out the train traffic flow on the line and reduce turnaround time, improving train operation efficiencies significantly.