

Upgradation of Sakoli to Gadchiroli Section of NH 353C (Package II - Km 55+800 to Km 116+000) in the state of Maharashtra to two lane with paved shoulder configuration.
Justification for Locating the Project in Forest Land

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH), Government of India, has decided to take up the development of Sakoli to Gadchiroli Section of NH 353C (Package II - Km 55+800 to Km 116+000) in the state of Maharashtra for augmentation of capacity for safe and efficient movement of traffic by upgrading to 2-lane/2lane with paved shoulder configuration based on the traffic demand.

The project road starts at Bhandara district border, passes through Wadsa, Armouri and ends at Gadchiroli.

The existing project road predominantly has a carriageway width ranging from intermediate to two lane configuration with earthen shoulder 0.5 to 1.5 m on both sides with exception at a few locations. Paved shoulders are observed at all minor and major built ups along the project stretch. The existing width is incapable to cope up with the increasing traffic. Being a National Highway, the project road requires minimum two-lane with paved shoulder configuration.

This stretch passes through plain terrain for entire length of highway. Horizontal geometry is straight for major portion of the highway. Vertical geometry needs substantial improvement to meet highway standards. Inadequate carriageway width and lack of adequate safety appurtenances and markings are major causes for accident along the stretch. Absence of proper highway lighting at built-up areas is another cause of concern.

The junctions present along the built-ups are lacking channelization, signs, place identification boards, markings and maintenance. The pedestrian crossing facilities such as zebra crossings and signs are nowhere observed.

The total length of the project stretch is 60.2 km of which 15.12 km is passing through forest area. The proposed widening requires diversion 10.81 ha of forest land in Wadsa, Armouri and Porla ranges in Wadsa Division. The proposed project stretch is passing through a tiger corridor identified by the National Tiger Conservation Authority. Therefore, the widening of this stretch requires forest clearance from Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and wildlife clearance from National Board for Wildlife.

The diversion of forest area has been limited to the minimum that satisfies the National Highway standards. As the project road is passing through the middle of the forest area, bypassing the forest and tiger corridor area is not possible. Alternatives have examined and found that no better option is available. The widening has been limited to non-forest land where the road is passing /abutting the forest land only on one side of the existing road, to reduce the requirement of forest land diversion.