

Travel time between West UP cities and Bundelkhand to be cut by 40%

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LUCKNOW: Commute time between several parts of western UP and Bundelkhand will reduce by almost 40% in the coming weeks, with the public works department upgrading 257km of state highways with the as part of the World Bank-sponsored core road network development project (UPCRNDP).

Motorists will experience better ride in stretches from Gola to Shahjahanpur, Baduan to Bijnor in western UP and Hamirpur to Rath and Gauratha to Chirgaon in Bundelkhand.

In a recent review meeting, senior officials of UPPWD reviewed the status of roads under phase one of UPCRNDP. Chasing a deadline of June 2025, the condition of 498km of state highways has to be enhanced, of which 264km has to be developed in phase 1, while the remaining 234km in the

second round.

To be developed on a budget of \$570 million (about Rs 4,350 crore), the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) has provided \$400 million at a nominal interest rate, while the state government has allocated the remaining \$170 million to the department.

PWD chief engineer (externally aided project) VK Jain said, "State highways under the first stage are in the final stages of completion. Four different state highways have been widened, upgraded and road safety features have been augmented... Socio economic upliftment of the affected population and community due to widening is also an important element of the externally aided projects."

The 60km Gola Gokarnath to Shahjahanpur route is the latest to get a complete makeover. The two-lane state highway is used extensively for transportation of cane produce, but lacked paved shoulder, blinkers, night safety provisions, drains, footpath, toilets, among other amenities.

Anurag Pandey, a resident of Powayan, said, "It takes half the time to cover the same stretch now. Earlier, we were not able to distinguish crossings at night. Now, markings and signages have been put up and blinkers have been installed."

The width of the carriageways of the four state highways has been increased from seven metres to 10 metres wherever widening was needed, pavement has been strengthened, formation level raised, 1.5 metre paved shoulder over the 10 metre width laid down where required to facilitate the movement of non-motorized vehicles, provision for drains have been made to avoid water logging, reflectors and signages have been put to warn motorists ahead of 'abadi' areas and several other features have been added.

Jain emphasised that training of the affected population, which give up their land chunks for the widening of carriageways, is conducted with the help of professionals. IBRD had approved the UP government's proposal in March 2019 after evaluating the traffic volume and internal economic return projections.

In the second phase, roads leading to the Buddhist circuit in eastern UP and the ones that will improve accessibility to the dedicated freight corridor transit points will be taken up in order to boost logistics and transportation of goods.