



Ministerial Statement
by
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Minister of Public Works

Update on Island-Wide Roadworks and the BELCO Infrastructure Project

24 March 2023

Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda with yet another report on the state of the island's roads and the various ongoing trenching projects and a look forward on what to expect.

Let me first say that I am well aware of the state of our roads as a daily user of them and a regular receiver of public complaints. I too am quite weary of the work that is being carried out and the time it is taking. I constantly remind myself though, while sitting at a stop light that I like having reliable electricity – so I'll endure til the end.

Mr. Speaker, colleagues are reminded of my multiple previous statements in February 2020, March and November 2022. In which I advised and updated the Bermuda public on the following:

1. BELCO's \$250 million capital plan, part of which is the major improvements to their underground high voltage system that will serve all their customers into the future with more reliable, safe and cost-effective electricity. This project is expected to last thirty-six (36) months; and
2. the concurrent Ministry of Public Works initiative under the Water and Wastewater Masterplan that sees the installing of new water and sewage mains and telecommunication conduits in Southside, St. David's and the Town of St. George's.

Now that we are in March of 2023 – it is clear that the original timeline which was set in 2020 of thirty-six (36) months will be exceeded. No one needs to ask why the delay? **Mr. Speaker,** simply put - what was declared in March 2020 - the COVID-19 Pandemic! The timeline essentially will be doubled.

Government moved immediately to protect our citizens by instituting protective measures to ensure our healthcare system could be maintained. In turn, almost all ongoing and scheduled construction projects were either halted, postponed or cancelled as worldwide the industry began to suffer from supply chain issues while attempting to grapple with the economic fallout resulting from the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker as the cost of supplies, materials and equipment have risen and continue to rise in Bermuda – BELCO, the Ministry and industry partners have been experiencing issues in the sourcing of materials and personnel for these two (2) initiatives therefore slowing progress. Now this does not mean that work is not being completed. For example in my November 2022 statement in the Honourable House I advised that under these initiatives two (2) of ten (10) projects were completed, four (4) were set to be completed by the end of 2022 – which I am now pleased to say that these have now concluded. As a reminder these four projects were –

1. The Parking layby construction at Mullet Bay Park in St. George's;
2. Work to the Bailey's Bay Dock rock cliff embankment repairs in Hamilton Parish;
3. Conduit Trench Works on North Shore Road from Barkers Hill to Store Hill; and
4. Conduit Trench Works on Palmetto Road leading into the Railway Trail near the Department of Public Transport entrance in Devonshire

As six (6) projects have now concluded, four (4) remain and are on schedule to be completed by the end of this year including, but not limited to, Trench Work on the Middle Rd in Southampton from Lighthouse Rd to Evans Bay through the roadway and railway trail that will commence in April 2023.

Mr. Speaker, it's worth reminding the magnitude of this project – in the East it began at the Mullet Bay Road Sub Station to Stokes Point Road – across the water to St. David's Road, along Kindley Field Road to the Airport Sub Station across the water again to Coney Island along the Railway Trail to North Shore Road, up Fractious Street to the Sub Station, then continuing along Fractious to Wilkinson Avenue to Harrington Sound Road Sub Station through Devil's Hole to Flatts Sub Station then Middle Road to Store Hill down to North Shore Road to Palmetto Road, Parsons Lane in Devonshire and to the Frog Lane Sub Station.

And, **Mr. Speaker**, in the West it began at Belmont Sub Station on Middle Road, Warwick to Camp Hill then Lighthouse Hill, Middle Road to Jews Bay. That work has not concluded – it has been paused awaiting the delivery of piping and is expected to

restart in April. Trenching will continue along Middle Road and the Railway Trail to the Evans Bay Sub Station. The end of the Western trenching is at George's Bay Road which has already been completed.

Mr. Speaker, this trenching works consist of 90,000 feet or 17 miles of trenching – as you can see this is a massive logistical undertaking that has covered virtually the entire Island. The areas that have not been mentioned had their high voltage cables replaced during a previous trenching exercise.

In areas that have the trench work completed – all trenches have temporary asphalt reinstated with the exception of the ones that do not require asphalt such as in the shoulders or railway trails.

Again, like I have said before in my November 2022 statement **Mr. Speaker**, and I quote:

"We acknowledge that these infrastructure projects have contributed to the [road] issues as the temporary asphaltting after trenching work has been uneven...but it's just meant to be that...temporary. It has never been the intention of the Government to leave our roads in this manner." **END QUOTE**

In certain areas the Ministry of Public Works has commenced with the permanent asphaltting of the areas that the trenching works have been carried out - which will ultimately lead to smoother roadways. This work can be seen at the St. David's entrance, Fractious Street, Wilkinson Avenue and the beginning of Harrington Sound Road.

However, **Mr. Speaker** as the Ministry continues this work, we have been notified by BELCO that as a part of their electrical infrastructure improvements - pull holes will need to be dug every 800 feet which will allow BELCO technicians to access and connect the high voltage cable lines through the newly placed conduits. Simply put – pull holes are 8' wide by 30' long holes dug in the road to allow the connection of the cables.

This process has already started on Middle Road near the Whitney Institute Middle School and will continue along the Eastern route noted above all the way to the National Sports Centre Sub Station. This cable pulling process will continue until September of this year.

Following the conclusion of the Eastern cable pulls the process will continue along the Western route noted earlier to the Evans Bay Sub Station.

What does this mean **Mr. Speaker**? Unfortunately, this means BELCO will again be required to go into the roadways to excavate pull holes across the Island to complete the electrical infrastructure connection.

Fortunately, BELCO did complete the pull hole required works for Fractious Street, Harrington Sound Road, North Shore Rd railway trail, Coney Island, & Kindley Field Park. This allowed for the aforementioned permanent asphaltting of the areas. However **Mr. Speaker**, as BELCO is required to complete the remaining infrastructure works, this delays the Ministry's permanent asphaltting initiative on most of the trenched roadways.

The BELCO works are anticipated to occur throughout this year into 2024. Once these works conclude - including the temporary asphaltting for the pull holes, the Ministry would then be able to continue the permanent asphaltting initiative for the relevant locations.

Although it is important to note that permanent asphaltting can only commence approximately 12 months after the ground settling has occurred. This timeframe is ideal as it would allow for smoother layering of the asphalt which ultimately will lead to smoother roadways.

Therefore **Mr. Speaker**, as BELCO completes its required works area by area, the Ministry will follow with permanent paving of the roads.

Now, **Mr. Speaker**, I'd like to speak to road paving works that will occur this year that will be carried out by our own team as well as contracting some work to East End Asphalt Company so that we can accelerate the repairs. A number of areas have been identified such as Middle Road Warwick between the former T. N. Tatem Middle School and the Marketplace in Southampton, in front of Lindo's Warwick, South Shore Road near Henry's Pantry, Crawl Hill near the Esso Service Station and Collectors Hill to name some of the locations that will be addressed. Other areas can be added to the list when reported. **Mr. Speaker**, temporary road paving will occur in these areas to improve the driving experience until permanent paving can be carried out. The permanent paving of Harrington Sound Road will also continue.

As noted in this year's Budget statement and Ministry debate – there has been an increase in funding for road works and as such technical officers are working diligently to solidify the 2023-2024 paving schedule. Although cost increases, supply chain issues and unforeseen project issues continuously hinder accurate planning. Colleagues will note the recent RFP issued for the provision of asphaltting aggregate –

which unfortunately we are having to import from overseas. We are looking at options for importing to keep costs down.

Mr. Speaker, the immediate pain for the motoring public is well worth it as when completed these initiatives will see the protection of our fresh water supplies, protection of our electrical infrastructure and ensuring sewage is properly disposed of for the next several years. This work safeguards the future not just for us here today, but for our descendants also. Additionally, since we required every utility to utilise the trenching at the same time – the need to dig up the roads in the future should be minimised.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.