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Contact:
Karla Marshall
karla.k.marshall@usace.army.mil

USACE builds road in Helmand province, cuts travel time in half

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is constructing a road in Helmand province, from Nawa to Lashkar Gah, that already has cut travel time in half.

“We are about 46 percent finished with construction on this 14.3 mile road,” said Robert Greco, the project manager. “But already travelers are saving about 30 minutes of time by using the portions we have completed.”

Construction on the two-lane road began in April 2012 and is scheduled for completion by June 2013. In addition to the 23-foot-wide paved roadway, there will be five-foot-wide gravel shoulders on each side and about 18 culverts to reduce the risk of flooding.

“This road will greatly benefit the people of Helmand province because travel times will be significantly reduced,” said Army Col. Vincent Quarles, the Afghanistan Engineer District-South commander.

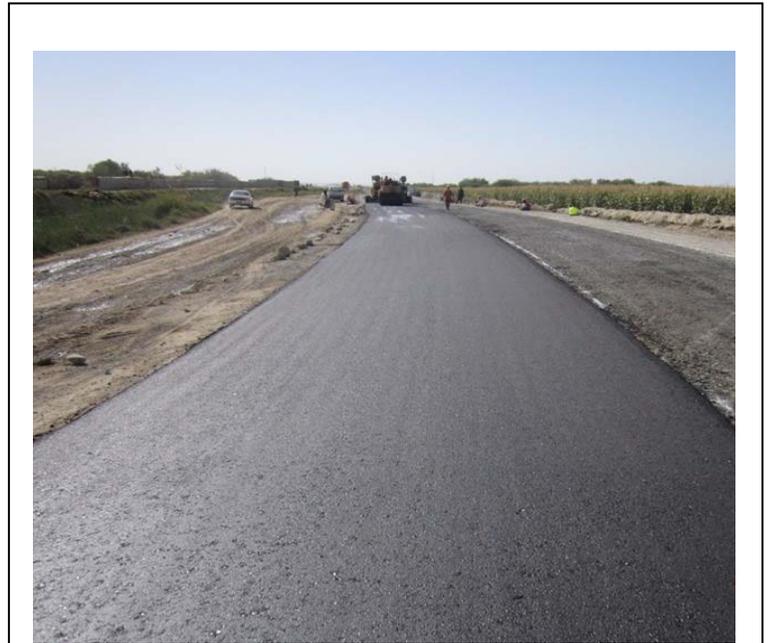
“Once we complete the road, in about eight months, travelers will have an even faster way to get from Nawa to Laskar Gah.”

Quarles said that the district’s project team has been monitoring progress throughout the duration of the project to ensure the road meets established international standards.

USACE is constructing the road in compliance with American Association of State Highway and Transportation Official Standards, said Greco who deployed to the Afghanistan Engineer District-South from the USACE New York District.

AASHTO standards are used for road projects throughout the U. S. and in many countries around the world, Greco explained.

The Afghanistan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and the Ministry of Public Works Road and Highway standards were also incorporated into the road’s design.



The Nawa to Lashkar Gah road, currently under construction by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Helmand province, Afghanistan will be complete in June 2013. (USACE Photo)

Greco and a team of engineers traveled the entire road last week to check on progress and ensure standards were met. “We had the contractor do borings to confirm the depth of the subbase; we measured the width of the road and inspected the surface at intervals along the road.”

In road construction, the subbase is often the main load-bearing layer of pavement. It is necessary for surfaces used by vehicles. Its role is to spread loads evenly.

“Overall, we were satisfied with the quality of construction,” said Mehdi Mizani, the Helmand Area Office lead engineer. “Borings showed that the subbase exceeded the design standards by about one half inch and that means quality.”

Mizani said that getting the road done as quickly as possible was an important goal, but that quality was the number one priority.

At this point in construction, motorists are able to travel on asphalt surfaces only at intervals along the route, but even those are not the finished surface. Some may think the detours and sub base are completed parts of the completed project, Mizani remarked, but they are not; they are diversions that allow traffic to move while road construction continues.

“They still must detour off the road where we’re working and in some sections they are driving on the subbase. Both of those issues slow them down,” said Mizani.

“We’d like to have the road finished so that people could travel more quickly,” he said. “As the weeks go by and more of the road is completed, travel times will continue to improve.”

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