

Recommendation on NHAI DCA Proposal No: FP/TN/ROAD/121598/2021

The following observations has been made with regard to recommended/proposed option and alternative option in this proposal in Deputy Director's Recommendation

- There is already an existing National Highway(NH 209) Road facility between Sathyamangalam and Chamrajanagar.
- The widening of the road from Chainage 277+385 to Chainage 280+265 will isolate the 142 Ha of Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) and a large proportion of STR and BRT tiger reserve will be sandwiched between 2 roads. This may have detrimental effects on wildlife and may significantly increase the Human-Wildlife conflict.
- In the alternative analysis submitted by User Agency in its Proposal, one of the benefits of the recommended route is enhanced speed (40-100 Km/h). As per Hon'ble Madras High Court direction in WP NO 1830/2022, the speed limit on NH 209 passing through STR is restricted to 30km/h in the plain area and 20km/h in the Ghat road area. Hence this benefit is negated.
- Similarly, the Hon'ble Madras High Court in WP 1830/2022 has restricted the 12-wheel or more-wheel vehicles to ply/use the NH 209 road passing through Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve. Hon'ble Court has also restricted the entry of vehicles carrying more than 16.2-tonne load including the weight of the vehicle.

2 days survey was done by the forest field team to check the total number and type of vehicles passing through STR using the NH 209 in 24 hours before the Hon'ble Court's directions. A similar exercise was also done after Hon'ble Court's directions came into effect. It was observed that commercial vehicle traffic had been greatly reduced by 60-65% whereas private vehicle traffic load has been reduced by 24%.

It is evident from the result and direction about traffic restriction imposed by Hon'ble Court, the existing road is sufficient enough to sustain the present traffic load.

- There is not much difference in a number of curves in both routes. Since recommended option also includes the land acquisition of 44.06 Ha, the social impact may be more than that of an alternative option.
- Since the forest stretch is located near to notified Chamrajanagar – Talamalai at Muddahalli Elephant corridor and forms part of the core Zone of Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, the mitigation measures are not in consonance with the MoEF&CC notified Wildlife Institute of India guidelines about eco-friendly measures to mitigate the impact of linear infrastructure on wildlife.
- In recommended option, a small part from Chainage 266+449 to Chainage 266+495 is included. There is no connection or link between the two different stretches. While calculating the forest land diversion in recommended option, the distance was calculated from chainage 266+449 instead of Chainage 277+385. Because of inappropriate comparison, the area of forest diversion is more in recommended option instead of the alternative option. The clarification was asked for by Deputy Director from the user agency but was not submitted correctly.
- Even if forest diversion is more in the alternative option in comparison to the recommended option, ecological cost i.e restriction of the gene pool, and isolation of the forest patches between two nearly located roads is a more recommended option.

Hence due to presence of alternative existing road and the proposal is not in consonance with the existing guiding principles of Forest and Wildlife conservation, the Forest Diversion Proposal i.e. FCA proposal is **not recommended**.