

Upgradation of Sakoli to Gadchiroli Section of NH 353C (Package III – All Bypasses) 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 bypasses to major settlement on Sakoli to Gadchiroli Section of NH 353C 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 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.

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. As the project road is passing through the middle of dense settlements at five locations, bypassing the buildup area is the only option to avoid wide spread displacement of people.

Hence, Bypasses are proposed to the following settlements, Sakoli, Dharpuri, Sangdi, Armori and Wadsa. All the five bypasses have been proposed as a single construction package.

The total length of all the bypasses is 16.515 km of which 1.850 km is passing through forest area at Sangdi and Wadsa bypasses. The proposed widening requires diversion of 4.01ha forest land in Sakoli range of Bhandara Division for Sandgi Bypass and 6.39ha forest land in Wadsa range of Wadsa Division for Wadsa Bypass. Therefore, the widening of this stretch requires forest clearance from Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

The diversion of forest area has been limited to the minimum that satisfies the National Highway standards. Alternatives have been examined and found that no better option is available. The bypass alignments are proposed mostly in non-forest areas except in two locations where bare minimum forest land is required.