

Workshop on Low-Volume Sealed Roads in Accra, September 27-29, 2006.

Opening statement by Mr. Olav Ellevset, the SSATP Program and the World Bank.

Mr. Martin hMensa, the Deputy Director General of Ghana Highway Authority.

Participants and representatives of the Governments of Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and The Gambia.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Slide 2

It is my pleasure to express the gratitude of the SSATP Program and the World Bank to the Government of Ghana for hosting this workshop on Low-volume sealed roads here in the City of Accra.

Let me also express my gratitude to all of you for showing interest for the theme of this workshop, and in particular the special efforts the participants from Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Burkina Faso and Zambia have made to join us here in Accra.

Slide 3

The Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP) is a partnership of presently between 33 Sub-Saharan Africa member countries, the European Union, several bilateral donors, regional associations and institutions, and the World Bank for promoting sustainable transport policies that will help reducing the poverty and supporting economic growth in the member countries.

It is indeed a privilege to be able to announce that Sierra Leone was accepted as SSATP's 33rd member country just a couple of weeks back, and even it might not have been officially communicated as yet we are happy to welcome two technical colleagues from Sierra Leone Roads Authority to

this workshop. We hope that you will find the issues interesting also for your country.

Slide 4

This is the third workshop in its kind arranged by the SSATP, and we have engaged two of the most experienced and well known consultants within this field. Mr. Mike Pinard and Mr. Charles Overby are also two of the authors of the SADC Guideline on Low Volume sealed roads.

As we know, good roads are important for the development of any country. But too often the standard and the condition of the roads are not able to provide the people with basic access to education, to health services, to markets for selling their produce, for getting supplies, etc. Unfortunately, this is a common situation in many countries.

Also in your countries, you might have seen gravel or earth roads that have been repaired and improved with a lot of effort and money, and which have served their purpose well for some time. But too often harsh weather conditions, sometimes combined with poor materials, have made these efforts and investments last for a short period only. Traditional black surfaces may not be a justifiable option due to lack of good quality materials within reasonable distance, and high costs compared with the number of vehicles using the road.

This workshop will deal with optional technologies using locally available materials, usually becoming economically interesting for lower traffic volumes than traditional designs. These roads will also have a black surface like any road using asphalt or bitumen in its top surfacing, but will have a more customized and tailored design corresponding to the local climate, the natural materials available in the area, and the volume and load of the traffic. Typically, construction cost savings would be 30-50% over 20 years in life-cycle costs compared with traditional surface treatments. These designs will utilize more common materials, and as such represent a much smaller threat to the environment. For quite a number of years we have seen that scarce resources of high quality construction materials are getting exhausted in many places in Africa.

Appropriate designs are therefore given more attention in many countries today, and the SSATP Program has included this as an important activity in its work program.

Slide 5

But one threat remains the same. A firm axle load control is of paramount importance in order to avoid that excessive load will damage the road structure and reduce the lifespan of the investments.

This workshop is meant as a forum for sensitization and exchange of experiences based on practical applications in several countries.

I am confident that you also will recognize the importance of involving consultants and contractors, ensuring that the knowledge about optional and appropriate designs also becomes available in the construction industry.

With these few words,

*Honorable Chief Guest,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Let me express our hope that these ideas will contribute to more roads with permanent surfaces in your countries.

Thank you for your participation!