



Liberia: Gov't Endorses New Approach to Cut Down Cost On Road Construction



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Assistant Public Works Minister for Operations, Kaustella Kialain, Team Leader of the Liberia-Swedish Feeder Roads Phase III Project, Adam Andreski and others tour the project

Monrovia – The Ministry of Public Works and the Embassy of Sweden have endorsed the construction of polyroads in the country, saying it is an effort in support of the government's Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

It can be recalled that the Liberian government and Polyroads/Polymer Pavements Limited entered into an agreement to construct a one kilometer road leading to the 14 Military Hospital.

The polymer pavement costs US\$424,000 per one kilometer instead of the regular US\$1 million or US\$1.2 million that are normally spent for a kilometer of asphalt or concert pavement.

The road project, which is the first in Liberia, commenced on Tuesday, November 19, 2019 in Schufflein, Margibi County.

Speaking in an interview with reporters after an inspection of the road at the weekend, Assistant Public Works Minister for Operations, Kaustella Kialain, said the introduction of Polyroads in Liberia will cut down huge expenditure on the construction of roads.

“This is a pilot project that makes the beginning of Polyroads in Liberia. We came along with our development partners and other engineers from the Ministry of Public Works and we have seen that this road has come to our satisfaction. We have realized that what was advertised, actually works. We are still at the beginning stage and it may look like we have completed a major milestone but we are still at the beginning. I’ll give them Nike sign. They have given us what they have told us,”Kialain said.

Minister Kialain pointed out that under the agreement reached with the South African company, the Ministry of Public Works provided technical and logistical support, while the company shouldered the cost of the products and others.



Partial view of the newly constructed polyroads at the 14th Military Hospital

“The project is pre-financed pilot project. You cannot buy a pig in the bag. The agreement is: our partners come and try it; we see whether it works or it is applicable before we can get into a partnership for other roads and the Government of Liberia can pay for it. Our contribution is actually in equipment and technical support,” she noted.

Minister Kialain pointed out that Polyroads remain one of the best alternatives for the construction of feeder roads.

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According to her, the pilot project has proven to be satisfactory in other countries across the African.

“We want to see how we can satisfy alternative for feeder roads to have it useful for a longer period of time with minimum cost of maintenance. Polyroads was used in South Africa, Ghana and other countries in Africa and around the world. For us, we intend to see how best this can open up other community roads, farm-to-market roads and in the rural areas,” she added

She noted that the continuation of Polyroads construction in Liberia will help create jobs especially for young people.

Minister Kialain disclosed that during the implementation of the pilot project at the 14 Military Hospital, about 75% labor was used during the project, while equipment tasks amounted to the remaining 25%.

“You will not need all of the heavy equipment. You can have minimum use of equipment with about 75% of labor intensive which can create jobs for the youths and other able body men and women within the society,” she stated.

According to Minister Kialain, laterite soil was stabilized prior to the application of Asphalt tech to ensure that the road last longer.

She explains: “This particular pilot project-Initially there are two phases. We used the laterite or what we call the red dirt. There is some stabilization done to it; meaning it is strengthen with a chemical so that it does not act like the normal red dirt roads that we have around here. Once it is strengthened and you leave it just like that without the asphalt tech on the surface that can last between three to five years. But then, once you add the asphalt tech on it, it lasts up to eight years”.



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The possibility of Polyroads taking over asphalt or reinforced concrete pavement of roads out of business remains huge.

And the Assistant Public Works Minister for Operations clarified that the introduction of Polyroads in Liberia is not intended to sideline or take other companies out of business.

Minister Kialain said government will help ensure that every company gets a “piece of the cake”.

“We are trying to achieve the Pro-Poor agenda of infrastructure development all across Liberia. It is this government that has had the highest number of kilometers of roads paved. It's is cost intensive and so, we need to find other alternative for communities or feeder roads. The big contracts or our investment will not go to only the big roads. This is the way in which everybody can get a little piece of that cake,” she said, adding that engineers from the Ministry of Public Works will continue to observe the project.

“There are one or two technical issues that we will continue to observe like the volume of traffic that rise on this road and the shoulders. We want to see whether this road can withstand the volume of traffic. A lot of the heavy equipment of the 14th military hospital is also plying this road. We will have a team of engineers here still observing that.”

For his part, the Team Leader of the Liberia-Swedish Feeder Roads Phase III Project, Adam Andreski praised the road, terming it as a milestone.

Andreski said polyroads technology can be adequately used for the construction of more feeder roads in Liberia.

“From what we have seen today, the work has been done. It’s good job. There is a need for maintenance if the road is to last longer,” he said.

Research shows that polyroads materials include both soiltech and asphalttech to reduce construction cost by 30% to 60% than the use of conventional asphalt or cement.

It speeds up construction time by 50%, and it is usable generally within 24 to 48 hours of application. The roads are environmentally friendly while less maintenance works are required.

It reduces the consumption of quarry aggregate used in conventional construction, and ensures job provision at a larger scale.

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