**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL**

GOAL NO. 9

PW, BUILDING & NH DEPARTMENT

SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

**Vision for NH sector in Assam**

Assam is the largest state among the North Eastern states of India and acts as gateway for the entire North Eastern (NE) region. It connects NE states with the rest of mainland India via a narrow wedge of 27 km; popularly known as the “Siliguri corridor” or the “chicken neck”. Thus, Assam plays an important role in integration of north east region with the rest of the country. The geographical isolation of the Assam further demands huge thrust on the development of transportation via roads and other transport modes. In addition, its international borders with countries like Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh further emphasize the importance of development of roads particularly National Highways, not only for Assam, but also for the entire NE region. Moreover a significant 74% of the total cargo traffic in the state (including interstate traffic) is transported through the road network bulk of which is carried through the National Highways, which highlights its importance and makes the development of NHs and adequate maintenance of the same vital.

In order to ensure overall development of the sector to drive social and economic growth of the state and the region as whole, a holistic Vision for the sector is required:

 *Creation of a strong network of NHs providing connectivity to all major towns & cities and key centres industry Centres, Tourism Centres and growing Urban Centres) of the state*

* Develop and strengthen connectivity to neighbouring states*

* Make Assam the preferred gateway to neighbouring countries*

**Implications of the Vision**

1. **Increase in overall NH network**

**The overall length of Road Network of the state to increase by 50% in the next 20 years for providing better and seamless connectivity**

The PWD road network in Assam is 48697 Km comprising of 3900 Km of National Highways, 2530 Km State Highways, 4379 Km Major District Roads, 36544 Km Rural Roads and 1409 KM of Urban Roads. The PWD road density in Assam is 62.08 Km per 100 Sq Km. out of which NH contributes about 4.97 Km. per 100 Sq Km. Apart from these, there are some Panchayat & Non PWD Roads (approx.. 6000 Km) and Municipal Roads (1087 Km) , but they are not yet under maintenance of the Public Works Roads Department or Public Works Building &NH Department.

Out of the total length of National Highways in Assam, 2541.937 Km is under APWD, NH Wing, 696.308 Km. under NHAI, 399.36 Km. is under NHIDCL, 31.0 Km. is under BRO, 13.65 Km. is under Railways, 25.807 Km. is under MoRT&H and 192.38 Km. is newly declared NH which is yet to be entrusted.

Further 1253.00 Km of State Highways has been declared in principle as National Highways which will increase the total length of National Highways in the state to 5,153 km. An additional length of 1400 Km. (approx) state roads also to National Highways which will ultimately raise highway length to about 6553.00 Km.

Under the PIDP vision, the overall length of Road Network including NHs of the state to increase by 50% (from the current length of 55,435 km to 71,000 km) in the next 20 years for providing better and seamless connectivity

**Envisaged status of road network in the state of Assam by2034-35**

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| **Categories of Road** | **Total Length (Km)** | **% of 6 Lane (by2034-35)** | **% of 4 Lane (by2034-35)** | **% of 2Lane (by2034-35)** | **% Single Lane**  **(by2034-35)** |
| NH | 10000 | 4 | 96 | -- | -- |

**Funding for NHs**

The investment requirement for National Highways has been estimated at Rs. 23,151 crore INR for the next 20 years. This investment is to be funded directly by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways under its various schemes like NHDP,SARDP-NE, NH(O) etc.

The length of NHs in the state has been growing at annual rate of 5% and is currently 3900.00 km. At this growth rate, the total length of NHs in the state will be around 5,000 Km within the next 6 years, which is the envisaged length.

Most of the National Highways in the state are currently 2 lanes. If the length of NHs keeps on increasing at the current rate of 5%, then by 2035 there will be 10,000 km of 2 lane National Highways.

**Major Plans/ Programs under implementation for National Highways**

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| **Schemes/ Programs** | **Funded by** |
| National Highway (Original Works) under Annual Plan | Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, GoI |
| Special Accelerated Development Program for North east (SARDP-NE) | Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, GoI |
| M&R Works   * Periodical Repair (PR) * Special Repair (SR) * Ordinary Repair (OR) * Flood Damage Repair (FDR) | Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, GoI |

**II. Development of Core Road Networks and bridging of Missing links**

The Core Road Networks will provide all-weather connectivity to neighboring states, countries and key growth centres.

Physical infrastructure development will lead to development of Core Road Networks with adequate feeder networks providing connectivity to key urban centres, industrial centres and tourism centres. The Core Road Networks will also provide seamless connectivity to neighbouring countries and neighbouring states thereby making Assam as the preferred gateway.

The major initiatives taken up in the Highway Sector in the State are outlined below:

**1) Development of NH 153 (Stillwell Road)**

Re-opening of the Stillwell Road to link NER to Kunming, the capital City of Yunan Province of China, through Myanmar will greatly boost economy and trade activities from the region to those South East Asian countries. NH-153 forms part of this famous Stillwell Road in NER.(from Lekhapani to Jairampur- 23.00 km) & improvement of the stretch to 2 lane with Paved shoulder (10m Carriageway) has already been completed under SARDP-NE. Government of India may consider for development and commissioning of this road from NER to China with necessary collaboration with Myanmar. Work on re-alignment of NH 37 & NH 38 for proper road link between Dibrugarh and Lekhapani has also been under implementation. Also 4-Laning of NH-37 from Dibrugarh to Numaligarh has been taken up by NHIDCL.

**2) Development of ASEAN Highway:**

The road connection to South East Asian countries is also available along ASEAN Highway network that can be accessed from the existing NH-39 & NH-36 of Assam through DIMAPUR –KOHIMA-IMPHAL to reach Myanmar at the Border town of Moreh. This route assumes lot of significance as it has been envisaged to connect Thailand, Laos, Vietnam Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia along the same highway network. This will definitely change the prevailing status of economic development of the country. Of the above, 71 km of NH-36 (from km 91/0 to 162/0) has already been developed to two lane with Paved shoulders under SARDP-NE (Phase-A). The route has already been declared as Asian Highway No.1.

**3) Connectivity to Bhutan:**

The NH 127A (Old NH No. 152) and 127D from Assam has a direct link to the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan. The NH 127A (38.00 km) and 127D (48.00 Km) have been developed as a two lane highway with Paved shoulder under SARDP-NE (Phase-A). Therefore there is ample scope of establishing good road connectivity from Bhutan and beyond. Recently two new National Highways viz NH No.127(C) & NH No.715 have been declared which will connect East West Corridor with Bhutan.

**4) Connectivity to Bangladesh through NH-51, NH-40, NH-151, NH-44:**

NER has 3(three) distinct national highways connecting the capital city of Bangladesh i.e. Dhaka. The routes are –

1. GUWAHATI-JORABAT-SHILLONG-DAUKI-SYLHET-DHAKA –This route stretches along NH 37& 40 totaling 467 km
2. GUWAHATI-JORABAT-SHILLONG-KARIMGANJ-SUTARKANDI-SYLHET-DHAKA –This route stretches along NH 37, 40,44&151 totaling 657 km
3. GUWAHATI-PAIKAN-DALU-DHAKA –This route stretches along NH 37, 51 totaling 261 km in the Indian Territory only, of which the entire 22 km of NH-51 (Assam portion) has already been developed to 2- lane with paved shoulder by PWD under SARDP-NE.

Development of the above routes will be very beneficial for International Trade and Commerce, and will also create new opportunities.

**5) Connectivity with Republic of China through Arunachal Pradesh:**

1. The NH-52 in the north bank of Brahmaputra from Baihata Chariali to Dhemaji is a major road connecting Arunachal Pradesh. This Road can be further developed and extended through Tibet**,** Republic of China through TAWANG of Arunachal Pradesh.
2. The proposed 4-lane connectivity of Itanagar from East West Corridor near Nagaon is in advance stage of implementation. DPR and feasibility report has already been submitted to Ministry of Road Transport & Highways. This route could be utilized to explore the possibility of establishing a road link directly with China. Feasibility in this regard may be assessed.

**6) Connectivity of NER with rest of the country:**

The following points also need urgent attention so that development initiatives related to have a better impact concerning all layers of society.

1. East West Corridor is on the verge of completion. There is another route of NH-31 from Boxirhat (Assam Bengal Border) connecting the entire North East. These two National Highways can adequately and efficiently connect all potential river routes through mighty river Brahmaputra.
2. To rationalize, simplify, and modify the rules & procedures hindering free flow of traffic on roads and highways to ensure hassle free movement particularly at interstate borders and at international Borders.
3. Urgent steps should be taken for connecting all the State Capitals of NER with 4-laning roads.
4. Gauge conversion to Murkakchelang on the North Bank is nearing completion. BG connectivity already exist upto Tinsukia in Upper Assam. Gauge conversion in Lumding – Badarpur Section is commissioned. These Railway route can be improved with double line facility to cater the ever increasing demand for smooth movement of goods and services.
5. River route through Brahmaputra may be developed with river Ports at suitable locations like Guwahati, Silghat, Jorhat, Dibrugarh etc.

**Missing linkages between north and south bank of river Brahmaputra identified for development**

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| **Sl. No.** | **Missing Link** | **Economic Importance** |
| 1 | Disangmukh Dhakuakhana-Lakhimpur Majuli | * Reduce the travel time from Nagaon – Dhakuakhana by 67hrs,and JorhattoMajuliby2hrs * It will connect to cultural hub of Majuli * Agriculture and horticulture in North side of Brahmputra will improve significantly * Huge tourism potential can be tapped |
| 2 | Narengi- Bonda-Kuruwa Duminichowki | * The link will help assist in minimizing traffic on Jalukbari Baihata Chariyali * Distance from Guwahati to Mangaldoi, Tezpur will be reducedby17KM * Convenient for people travelling from North bank to Guwahati * Can enable development of a satellite town on North bank (Kuruwa) |
| 3 | Dhubri – Phulbari Bridge | * Reduce the travel time from 8-10 hrs to1hour * Will help in easy evacuation of goods traffic originating from Meghalaya * Help in connectivity to Bangladesh via Meghalaya |
| 4 | Gohpur-Numaligarh Bridge | * To help preserve the World Heritage Site of Kaziranga |

1. **KEY ISSUES**

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| **Sl. No.** | **Issues** | **Remarks** |
| **1** | Land Acquisition | There is a need to develop necessary means and tools for smoothing the process of land acquisition. A dedicated Land Acquisition Cell can be formed within the department. The unit should be headed by senior officer from the Revenue Department who will liaison with district authorities. The cell should be part of the PW Building & NH Department to deal with LA. |
| **2** | Forest & Environmental clearance | For new National Highways with new alignments forest and environmental clearance is obligatory for implementation. Consultants engaged for FS&DPR works are to be well conversant with statutes for these clearances and dedicated support team from Employer is to be created for facilitation of the process |

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| **Sl. No.** | **Issues** | **Remarks** |
| **3** | Utility shifting | State level coordination committees are to be set up with representative nodal executives from various works Departments for planning & expediting the Utility shifting works |
| **4** | Capacity building | Capacity building of Departmental Staff and Contracting agencies is key to proper execution of NH projects. Workshops & skill development programmes, Seminars exhibitions etc are to be organized for capacity building of agencies and manpower of the department. |
| **5** | Legal Cell | Litigation and arbitral proceedings are nowadays intrinsic of construction activities involving both the employer and the contractors. This causes lot of delays in completion of works with time and Cost overrun .A fully equipped legal cell to coordinate with court cases and arbitration will be beneficial for hassle free implementation of the projects. |
| **6** | Quality Control Units | Quality assurance and audit units need to be set up at circle and division level with trained and experienced technical staff to monitor the field execution of the projects as per standards. The units need to be well equipped with requires paraphernalia ,gadgets and vehicles for effective monitoring of the projects |
| **7** | Availability of stone materials | Projects of on-going works on National Highways are suffering due to scarcity of stone materials. Issuance of clear and useful guidelines about the extraction of construction materials by Environment & Forest and Mines & Minerals Departments would be extremely helpful for the concerned departments for timely completion of NH projects. |