Durres-Morine Road Corridor
Enironmental Impact Assessment

Mott MacDonald and
TECNIC Consulting Engineers

Milot to Rreshen EIA Review and Update
Executive Summary

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Public Disclosure Authorized

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Introduction

Scott Wilson has been commissioned to carry out an independent review and update of the EIA for the Durres-Morine Road Corridor. This review is to cover the specific 26km section of the route from Milot to Rreshen. The main changes to the original design are the construction of an embankment across the river terrace to the south of Milot and the overpass at Milot. The alignment is shown in Figure 1.1. This section is the non-technical executive summary of the main issues and impacts.

Alternatives

The Alternatives that were considered under this project were:

Alternative 1: Milot – Mejha Dilemma – Puke – Hodroja Dilemma - Kukes – Morine

Alternative 2: Milot – Rreshen – Blinisht – Hodroja Dilemma– Kukes – Morine

Alternative 3: Milot – Rreshen – Blinisht - Reps - new alignment up the River Fani i Vogel River valley including tunnel – Kolshi -- Kukes – Morine

Main Environmental Impacts

Natural Soils and Agricultural Soils

The proposed road could have an impact on soil erosion, particularly where increased cuttings and embankments are required. This erosion would lead to loss of land for production, loss of habitat, increased flood risk (by more rapid and higher levels of runoff), undermining of the road and increased siltation of the River Fani and the River Matit. This would have to be mitigated through proper engineering, the use of gabions (stackable wire cages filled with stone rubble) in appropriate places and the rapid replanting of bare soil with grasses and other ground cover, as set out in the Environmental Mitigation Plan.

The road design incorporates groynes that can result in erosion on the opposite river bank. The design must be updated to include mitigation measures (such as gabions) to protect the opposite bank and prevent this impact being significant.

The proposed road embankment to the south of Milot, may affect groundwater flows, resulting in water ponding behind the embankment and an adverse impact on agricultural land. Any flood flows that overtop the embankment could also pond behind it and have a similar impact on the agricultural land. The detailed embankement design will incorporate flood relief outlets (with flat-valves), the valves will be open when required to release the water and thereby mitigate this impact.

There is likely to be contaminated land within the vicinity of the abandoned copper processing plant a Rubik, a detailed survey of this complex is required to identify any contaminated land within the footprint of the proposed road. Any contaminated areas would present a risk to construction workers, road users, the environment and maintenance workers in the future. Any contamination would need to be mitigated either through bio-remediation or the removal of contaminated soil. Construction workers must be provided with the appropriate safety equipment. The contaminated soil would need to be remediated before being reused.

Air Quality and Noise

Locating construction compounds away from sensitive receptors and standard good site management practices, as detailed in the Environmental Management Plan, will be required to keep the impact on air quality and noise to a minimum level during construction. Due to the low predicted increases in the level of traffic on the road the predicted increase in noise and decrease in air quality are not considered to be significant.

Climate

The proposed road scheme is not predicted to have a significant impact on climate.

Surface and Groundwater

The impacts on water quality during construction are likely to be low, provided good site management practices are adopted.

During operation, the proposed road embankment to the south of Milot could potentially have an adverse impact on flood risk, upstream and downstream of the embankment. However, through discussion with the ITP hydrological specialists who carried out the analysis of the flood risk implications, we understand that the exisiting bunds will prevent any increase in flood risk downstream and based on their calculations they do not anticipate an increase in flood risk upstream of the proposed embankment. ITP stated that the risk of overtopping of the bund on the other (northern) side of the river would increase, however, this will be mitigated through raising the height of the bund by 10cm. The area will be closely monitored to assure the results of the flood risk analysis are consistent with the actual fllod conditions and the mitigation measures are effective.

During operation the traffic volumes will be generally low and the drainage design would be to allow surface water to runoff to the verge of the road. This would allow some treatment of pollutants in the soil, and because there will be high levels of dilution in the rivers the concentrations of pollutants due to the road runoff would normally be undetectable.

The pollution risk from accidental spillage may increase slightly due to the higher volumes of traffic, consideration should be given to the use of retention basins with reedbeds.

Where the soft verge is limited (or non-existent) then drains must be installed and directed to a specific discharge point. This should be designed to ensure that erosion around the discharge point does not take place. It should also be designed to ensure that the flood risk

presented by the receiving body of water is not increased, which might require attenuation ponds to be constructed.

Flora and Fauna

The scheme is unlikely to have significant impact on fauna and flora. The construction of the road will be scheduled to prevent the destruction of habitats used by nesting birds in the breeding season. Construction compounds will be located away from sensitive habitats and fenced to minimise intrusion into adjacent habitats. During operation, the risk of traffic hitting wild fauna will be reduced through the use of traffic warning signs.

Landscape

The construction of the scheme is likely to have a significant impact on the landscape. However, it will be possible to reduce the severity of the impact through the adoption of measures set out in the Environmental Management Plan, and any remaining impacts will be of limited duration.

The proposed overpass at Milot can be expected to have an impact on the residents of Milot and the character of the surrounding area. The severity of the impact on residents will have been reduced to some extent by giving them advanced notice of the proposals through the public consulatation. The visual impact was not identified as an important concern at the consultation.

The current problems of illegal dumping of waste adjacent to roads could increase significantly once the proposed road is constructed. Increase enforcement of illegal dumping would be required to mitigate the potential impact, and prevent it having an adverse impact on the landscape.

Land Use

The construction of the scheme may have a minor beneficial effect on the land value of the potentially contaminated land adjacent to the copper processing complex in Rubik.

The scheme would result in the irreversible loss of high quality agricultural land on the low flood plain fields of the Matit and Fani Rivers. The loss of agricultural land would be mitigated through compensation as part of the resettlement plan.

The proposal to upgrade the route to a dual carriageway at some stage in the future would result in an even greater cumulative impact on agricultural land, and properties adjacent to the proposed alignment.

Residential and commercial properties that would be destroyed by the scheme would be compensated as part of the resettlement plan.

Social and Economic

The social impacts from construction camps in relatively remote areas can be significant, especially when the workforce is not from the same cultural background as the resident community. Importing diseases can be a particular problem, especially HIV. This risk is less likely to be problematic where women traditionally avoid contact with non-family males. However, it can be reduced through education and raising awareness of the health risks prior to the commencement of construction.

The operation of the road can be expected to have a significant beneficial effect on the economy of the area through increased access to markets, enhanced agricultural production and secondary processing of materials, increased tourism and associated services, leading to an increase in employment. Improved access to health services and other facilities would have positive effect on social welfare.

The proposed scheme can be expected to lead to increased residential and commercial development adjacent to the road. If development takes place on valuable agricultural and forestry land along the route, the scheme could have a moderately significant impact on these resources. Enhanced enforcement is required to reduce the high levels of illegal construction and protect this land and prevent the scheme leading to an increase in unlicensed logging and quarrying, and illegal waste dumping.

National and Cultural Heritage

The potential impact on undiscovered archaeology at the construction stage would be mitigated through employing an archaeologist to supervise any works in sensitive areas. If any archaeology were found then the construction works would be stopped and the appropriate authority informed. The scheme is not predicted to have a significant impact on built heritage.

The impact on social culture depends on the values of the communities affected. There may be a slow decline in traditional lifestyles and cultural values, but the local population may wish to embrace the potential changes and improve their quality of life through modernisation.

Institutional Strengthening

Environment Unit

Institutional strengthening of the GDR should be implemented through the project. This would involve training the new staff in the environmental team on best environmental management practice, and an international consultant providing support in the interim. This has been proposed in response to the concern expressed within GDR that the environmental management plan would not be implemented to the level required, due to the lack of expertise in GDR to supervise such works. The output should be trained staff and a set of

guidelines to act as national guidelines or standards on environmental management for all road projects in Albania.

Road Maintenance Department

Road maintenance in Albania is problematic at present. Institutional strengthening of the Road Maintenance Department is currently been carried out under a separate project. This is considered to be essential to secure the long-term benefits of this proposal.