



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Public Works

Ministerial Statement

Lt. Colonel the Hon. David A. Burch, OBE (Mil), ED, JP, MP

Minister of Public Works

Forecast for Highways Works

21st March 2022

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide the House with a report on the state of the island's roads and the various trenching projects ongoing and projected for the upcoming year.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that the Ministry of Public Works entered into a partnership with Belco for the replacement of the high-voltage underground cable network throughout the island. This critical work involves trenching, the laying of new cables and conduit in the main roads. This has no doubt impacted the daily commute of many, and while we work very hard to coordinate the various projects to have the least impact on the public as possible, the sheer volume of work, meant that commute times had to be impacted for progress to be made. For this I want to thank the public for their ongoing patience and their continued patience for the work still yet to come.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to highlight that not only is the aged Belco infrastructure being replaced, but Public Works is also taking advantage of the trenching works to install new water mains and telecommunication conduit wherever feasible for future use. To those who may not know, the most expensive cost of placing utilities underground is not the conduit or pipe, but the trenching and road reinstatement that comes afterwards.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that through our partnership with Belco, the government has been able to add new underground assets for a fraction of the cost it would have been otherwise. These are assets the government can recoup from later in the form of leasing to other utilities or to make use of itself for additional services to the public.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to highlight the current state of the Belco project and what we should expect for the coming year. The Belco program is anticipated to be

nearing substantial completion by next year with some ten (10) projects progressing concurrently. These include trenching works along various points of Middle Road in Southampton, Warwick and Smiths, Frog Lane to Palmetto Road leading into Barkers Hill roundabout in Devonshire and North Shore Road from Barkers Hill roundabout to Store Hill.

The long awaited widening and trenching on Middle Road in Warwick from the former T. N. Tatem Middle School to St. Anthony's Church is well underway. Negotiations are ongoing with one final land owner that we anticipate will conclude shortly so that the entire stretch of road can be improved.

Mr. Speaker, for the role Public Works plays, our Highways teams will be performing the majority of the temporary reinstatement works along the trenching routes. This temporary reinstatement is the paving that many have complained about on Harrington Sound Road. I can assure you that this is temporary and is to allow for the settlement of the trenches beneath. The final reinstatement will come about a year later when that settlement is complete. With our current schedule, we will be paving Harrington Sound Road as the first fully reinstated road next fiscal year starting in April with the rest to be completed in phases as the trench works go through their settling period.

Mr. Speaker, Belco is not the only entity involved in large scale trenching works at this time. Many in the East End will be well aware--need I say "painfully aware" of the work being carried out by the Bermuda Land Development Company (BLDC) with the upgrading of the water and waste-water infrastructure in St. Georges and St. David's. As previously mentioned in numerous press releases, this work is part of the Water Master Plan and will see the revitalization of critical water and waste water infrastructure to support BLDC, the town of St. George and the new St. Regis hotel along with the Eastern community as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, again the role of public works is to provide temporary reinstatement and coordination of the five (5) trenching projects taking place, with the full reinstatement to come some time later. The areas include trenching works taking place from Mullet Bay Road to Echo Lane in St. George and various spots on St. David's Road in St. David's, including Coopers Landing Road and Southside Road.

Mr. Speaker, with all this said I wish to prepare the public for what they should expect for the year to come. They should expect another year of traffic lights and trenching, then another year or two of paving, but after that the majority of the work will be completed and the value gained will be substantial.

Mr. Speaker, it was always the goal of the project to do all this work at once, to

inconvenience the public once and to hopefully not have to disturb these newly paved roads for the next ten to twenty years. We also recognized that this would create significant economic activity in the country at a time when there was a slowdown – thus also creating new jobs with virtually every trenching company in Bermuda getting some work.

Mr. Speaker, while I can empathize with the motoring public that the long queues and waits have been challenging at times, I want to stress that it is vital for this work to take place and that we are doing all we can to minimize the impact. To this end I wish to thank the Acting Principal Highways Engineer, Mrs. Tina Beer-Searle and her team, who have been instrumental in coordinating both the Belco and BLDC works to ensure the safety of the public and the smooth flow of traffic across the island while the work takes place.

And as I mention safety, I again ask for the public's patience especially when waiting at traffic lights as we have seen several accidents caused by people running the red light. Please take note of the updates on the paving works that we will endeavor to provide more frequently this year, so you can plan ahead, make alternate routes or just leave a littler earlier than usual.

I again wish to thank our partners at Belco and our colleagues at BLDC for the tremendous work they are doing to restore the infrastructure of the island while also providing much needed jobs in the construction industry.

Thank you **Mr. Speaker**