

Brazil Vows to Repair 16,000 Miles of Roads in Bad Shape

Contributed by Ana Paula Marra
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Brazil's National Transportation Confederation (CNT) has released a note praising the decision by the government to repair 16,430 miles (26,441 kilometers) of highways, including some that were transferred to states in 2002.

Many of the country's highways are reported to be in a dangerous state.

The work is to begin on January 9 and will involve costs of US\$ 187.9 million (440 million reais).

The president of the CNT, Clésion Andrade, declared that the emergency repairs were more than welcome. He pointed out that highway repair funds regularly get held back, saying that in the past administration the funding was often only 50% of what was needed for highway maintenance.

He added that during 2005 the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva administration had spent more than the average for the last decade.

"We totally support this initiative and hope it will be a definitive solution for our highway problems," said Andrade.

Last July, the Brazilian Minister of Transportation, Alfredo Nascimento said that the repair and expansion of the Brazil's highway system was one of the government's main challenges.

According to the Minister, his ministry was working with a US\$ 2.5 billion budget last year, which was approved by Congress for strategic and important highways. The money was being used to duplicate some highways and repair the pavement in others.

"In 2004 we repaired over 5,000 kilometers of highways. With the money we have for this year, we will raise that to 14,000 kilometers of highway that have been repaired," he said at the time, adding that the work was focused on the country's main cargo corridors where the traffic is heaviest.

Nascimento also cited a World Bank study that said Brazil needed to invest US\$ 2.5 billion per year over a four-year period to restore its highway system. The minister said that those funds were guaranteed for 2006 and 2007.

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