
Completion of D1 highway still years away

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Téma: PPP projekty

WHILE last October construction finally began of the long-awaited 60-kilometre bypass of Bratislava, drivers will have to wait a bit longer for the complete D1 highway from Bratislava to Košice. Meanwhile, the Turany-Hubová stretch in northwestern Slovakia is causing the biggest headaches for the government and highway builders. After a landslide during construction, the state began reconsidering its final route.

Currently in Slovakia, nine stretches of highways and dual carriageways totalling more than 90 kilometres are being built. These should be completed between 2017 and 2020. This year, builders should complete construction of a stretch of the dual carriageway R2 Zvolen east Pstruša; the D3 highway stretch Svrčinovec-Skalité; the D1 highway stretch Svinia Prešov west, and the D3 stretch, Strážov at Žilina Brodno, spokeswoman of the National Highway Company (NDS) Eva Žgravčáková informed. "In terms of construction of new stretches, everything will depend on availability of funds and the process of public procurement which is not fully under the control of NDS," Žgravčáková told *The Slovak Spectator*.

Meanwhile, financing needed for construction of highways and dual carriageways remains in question. EU funds Slovakia is set to receive during the 2014-2020 programming period have been already allocated for existing projects. Yet it is not clear whether Slovakia will continue to receive money from the EU.

For that reason, the Robert Fico government is pushing to loosen the debt brake, an instrument Slovakia adopted back in 2011 to prevent an increase in the country's debt to critical levels. Its loosening would allow the state to borrow more money, for example, for completion of highways. Other possible sources include the state budget, other European sources, i.e. Juncker's package, or public-private partnership (PPP) projects.

Costs for building highways in Slovakia remain in the spotlight. The Institute for Economic and Social Reforms (INEKO) think tank criticised, for example, the D3 stretch Čadca-Svrčinovec. The price for which the winning consortium will build it is about 40 million above state expertise estimates.

Also the south-western bypass of Prešov, part of the D1 highway connecting Bratislava with Košice, is subject to criticism for its high costs.

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Pavol Kováčik, chair of the Association of Construction Entrepreneurs of Slovakia, perceives numerical comparison of highway construction prices as nonsense. Kováčik served as an investment director at NDS up until June 2016.

"It is impossible to compare the price of one kilometre [of a highway] from different projects," Kováčik told the *Pravda* daily. "This is because each highway or railway is unique. The share of bridges, tunnels, necessary investments like building anti-noise walls, anti-flood measures, replacing of drain pipes or electrical lines, among others affect prices the most. Also relief of the land and geology have an impact." Construction Minister, Ārpád Ārsek last December said that if an analysis shows that the price of the Prešov bypass is too high, he is ready to scrap the tender. For now, it is the consortium of Eurovia SK, Eurovia CS, Doprastav and Metrostav Slovakia that should build the stretch for 356 million ex VAT. The ministry is currently updating the EIA report on this project so that its construction can be financed by EU funds.

Construction of D3 highway

Earlier in January, the consortium of Strabag, Porr and Hochtief construction companies started construction of the highly anticipated D3 stretch, Čadca-Svrčinovec. Particularly drivers heading to

Poland or the Czech Republic will benefit from this 5.6-km stretch. Construction should last four years and cost almost ?240 million ex VAT.

The D3 highway from Dolný Hričov near Žilina running up to the SlovakPolish border in Skalité will be 60 kilometres long and should be completed by 2025. Although construction of D3 started 20 years ago, only the 8.5-kilometre stretch of Hričovské Podhradie-Žilina Strážov and the fourkilometre stretch, OščadnicaČadca built according to a half-profile, i.e. with half of the planned lanes, are in operation. Almost 22 kilometres of this highway are under construction and building of the remaining more than 34 kilometres has not yet started, the Pravda daily wrote.

Bratislava-Košice highway
far from sight

The D1 stretch TuranyHubová remains to be a problematic stretch on the Bratislava-Košice highway. Other missing stretches are either under construction or their preparations are far from underway.

The stretch TuranyHubová connects the Turiec and Liptov regions and its construction is very demanding from the point of view of environmental protection, geology as well as financing. So far, the state has been pushing for a cheaper surface variant that would do greater harm to the nature reservations of the Lower and Higher Fatra mountains. However, after a landslide during construction of the surface highway near Šútovo in 2013, it began reconsidering the final route; and the oldest variant with the six-kilometre Korbel'ka tunnel was again under consideration. Now, the Environment Ministry is evaluating submitted surface and tunnel variants. It expects to decide which variant is the most acceptable by this spring.

Experts estimate that rerouting of the TuranyHubová stretch and its building will last about 10 years, i.e. until about 2026. Its construction will include building of the 5,851-metre Korbel'ka tunnel and the 2,898-metre Havran tunnel.

Costs for construction of the Turany-Hubová stretch with the tunnels are estimated at about ?700 million.

Currently, there is no funding allocated for it in the state budget or from EU funds.

Foto popisl From the ceremonial launch of the construction of the D3 Čadca-Svrčinovec stretch.
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