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Dual-carriageway could replace deadly road.

£100m plan to ease access to mountain villages

PLANS could soon be underway to fix up one of the deadliest roads on the island, which has claimed the lives of around 60 victims in the last decade alone.

The current Limassol-Saittas road, which is the main link between mountain villages such as Kyperounta, Kato Amiantos, Pelendri and Platres, has for years been a thorn in the side of the transport department because of the huge costs needed to expand and widen it.

During Tuesday's session at the House Communications Committee, committee members Yian-nakis Thoma and Aristos Chrysostomou spoke of the need for an entirely new solution – namely a dual carriageway that would shorten the distance by some 35 minutes and drastically reduce the risk of traffic accidents.

The current road to Saittas, which usually takes about an hour from the Limassol exit, is widely known as being one of the most dangerous on the island mainly because it has many sharp bends.

The current road is 30Kms long whilst the plans for the new dual carriageway would reduce the distance by 6kms.

But the plans would come at a heavy price for the government with costs expected to reach above £100m.

According to officials of the public works department, tenders would need to be sought to undertake the road construction at the beginning of next year.

The roadwork plans would then be ready by September 2010 and work would begin by 2012.

Such is the problem posed by the road, claimed deputies, that many inhabitants in the villages have already relocated to Limassol.

According to the community leaders, that in turn could lead to total desertion of the villages in the near future.

'Imagine how much money the mountain residents in the area would save if the distance from Limassol was 25 minutes instead of 50 minutes', said Alassa community leader Savvas Savva.

Commenting about the number of lives lost on the road, Kyperounta community leader Kyriacos Kyriakides said 'if the new road is not built soon, everyone will leave the villages,' whilst other community leaders spoke of more incentives for investment in the areas with the introduction of better and safer access to and from the villages.

Kato Amiantos resident Lenas Markantonis, 37, appealed to the committee saying: 'We are the last generation from the 40 mountain villages. We are keeping the tourism intact in the area, we put out fires, we are replanting trees in the forest. If the new road isn't built, the area will become a graveyard.'