

AUTO INDUSTRY – 1

Recovery Plan

Work on Tshwane auto SEZ in full swing after lockdown

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Work on the R3.4-billion Tshwane Automotive Special Economic Zone (TASEZ) is forging ahead, following delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, with clearing of the site, groundworks and the installation of bulk infrastructure under way.

The public-private partnership, located next to the Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa's (FMCSA's) assembly plant, in Silverton, was officially launched in November.

A key milestone in the formation of the TASEZ was the establishment of the board in March.

The board comprises representatives from all three spheres of government, along with two senior executives from FMCSA, namely operations VP **Ockert Berry** and FMCSA Africa government affairs executive director **Dhiren Vanmali**.

Ford also holds a key position on the technical steering committee that is leading the implementation of the project.

"The unexpected Covid-19 lockdown unfortunately delayed the [TASEZ] project by several months, and also impacted the disbursement of the initial funds for clearing of the site and the commencement of the bulk infrastructure implementation," says Berry.

"However, extensive design work was done in the interim, and the construction teams were on site from the beginning of August, with significant earthworks already completed over the past month."

By the end of August, more than 95 000 m² of the main site adjacent to Ford's Silverton assembly plant had been cleared, with more than 10 500 m³ of top soil hauled or stockpiled for construction.

"The TASEZ board developed a comprehensive recovery plan with all key stakeholders to ensure that the project meets the targeted deadlines for the bulk infrastructure to be completed and the top structures to be built," Berry adds.

"We are confident that most of our suppliers will be able to take occupation of their facilities, as planned, during the first half of 2021, thanks to the commitment of the appointed contractors."

The TASEZ has seen keen interest from Ford's suppliers, says Vanmali.

"We announced last year that we had expressions of interest from nine supplier companies," he says.

"We currently have 12 suppliers that have



DIGGING DEEP

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committed to setting up operations within the SEZ, with an anticipated investment of more than R4.3-billion in the economy, and another ten have shown keen interest.

"Accordingly, the team is already hard at work on the next phases of the project beyond the initial 81 ha site."

Once completed, the SEZ will span 204 ha of land currently owned by the City of Tshwane.

With the economic empowerment of local communities being one of the overarching principles of the TASEZ, the board has established a community engagement framework to drive this process.

"Employment, skills development and creating opportunities for individuals, as well as for small, medium-sized and microenterprises (SMMEs) from the surrounding areas, are fundamental to the TASEZ, and are integral to Ford's commitment to empowering South Africans," says Vanmali.

An online TASEZ SMME portal has been created specifically with this goal in mind, allowing SMMEs to register and tender for various elements of the construction work.

A jobs portal has also been added for individuals wishing to apply for career opportunities.

A TASEZ company has been established as the operating company for the SEZ, and is supported by the Coega Development Corporation.

It is estimated that the TASEZ will create more than 8 700 jobs during construction of the first phase of the project, followed by about 2 100 permanent jobs when the zone becomes operational. ■