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STORY

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From a Road to a Highway

Traversing more than 500 kilometers of Ghana's coast, the National Highway 1—or N1—represents not only a regional thoroughfare on the Trans-West African Highway system, but also an economic and trade lifeline. The highway connects Ghana's international airport and the two deepwater sea-freight ports in Tema and Takoradi to key agricultural production zones. Ghana is an emerging economy and a trade hub for much of West Africa; the recent exponential growth affecting the Accra metropolitan area and its 3.5 million inhabitants highlighted the need to address a major chokepoint: a 14-kilometer section of N1 in the heart of Accra.



The MCC compact with Ghana included a \$217 million investment in Ghana's aging transportation network. The new segment of the N1 highway, pictured here, evolved from a two-lane road to a six-lane divided highway with pedestrian walkways and safety barriers. The compact will benefit over 1.2 million Ghanaians.

Increased transportation and vehicle operating costs for agricultural and other sectors and excruciating travel times have placed significant constraints on the growth of Ghana's economy. While plans for the road's expansion slowly evolved since the mid-1960s, Accra built up rapidly around the old road corridor. Handling up to 30,000 vehicles per day, this stretch of the N1—a two-lane undivided road—was often congested and lacked the operational capacity required to serve such high volumes of national, transnational and local traffic.

With a cross-sector approach to transforming agribusiness development across 30 districts in Ghana, the Millennium Challenge Corporation's \$547 million compact undertook and completed one of Ghana's most significant infrastructure projects: the rehabilitation and construction of a critical section of the N1 highway. The recently completed highway now boasts a six-lane, divided thoroughfare with four overpasses, one elevated circle interchange, street lighting, drainage, bus stops, extra-wide sidewalks with graded ramps, pedestrian walkovers, and stoplights at all major intersections.

The new highway is expected to reduce peak travel time from one hour to 20 minutes on the new 14-kilometer stretch. Ghanaian workers can now more easily travel to their jobs, and Ghanaian families will have better access to much-needed social services.



The N1 highway before construction, top, and during construction, bottom.

In an effort to ensure the project's long-term success, construction was preceded by an environmental impact assessment and the creation of environmental management and resettlement action plans. Throughout the construction phase, more than 4,800 people and 2,500 structures were relocated and those affected received resettlement compensation. In addition to the new extra-wide sidewalks with graded ramps and stoplights at multiple intersections, the Government of Ghana foresees implementing new works to further enhance access for the disabled. Trees were replanted along the corridor to soften the environmental impact of increased traffic and improve the highway's aesthetic appearance.

The N1 highway represents just one of many components of the MCC compact, which was designed to strengthen various links across Ghana's agricultural value chain. MCC-funded projects in the transportation sector also included construction of new roads and two new ferries and landing stations on Lake Volta. These investments in transportation, totaling more than \$217 million, are expected to generate a \$321 million increase in household incomes. They also complement and build upon MCC's numerous agriculture sector investments.

MCC's integrated approach to agribusiness development included farmer training in high-value crop production, construction of agribusiness centers and cooling facilities for local crop storage, and construction of new feeder roads to connect farmers to markets. More than 66,000 farmers trained with MCC funding are

expected to see a reduction in post-harvest losses and an increase in volume and quality of produce reaching market destinations. For produce with international destinations, the Perishable Cargo Center at the Kotoka International Airport will significantly increase export volumes and ensure products loaded onto daily cargo flights arrive farm-fresh on supermarket shelves in Europe the very next day.

As a gateway to trade, commerce, and opportunity, MCC's investments in Ghana are expected to benefit more than 1.2 million Ghanaians and increase incomes by more than \$690 million over 20 years. Ghana is poised not only to be West Africa's primary economic hub, but also an enduring partner for the United States and MCC.