

Plans afoot for widening of reserve forest road at Jawadhu hills

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“Special teams have been working on the project, especially on earmarking the forest land required. Nod of the Department of Forests is also required,” S. Thirunavukarasu, Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE), State Highways (Polur), told *The Hindu*.

Once measurement for the required forest land is taken, Tiruvannamalai District Forest Officer (DFO) Yogesh Kumar Darg will inspect the route, before the proposal is sent to the

State government for approval.

Road widening project

As per the plan, the 3.75-metre road will be widened to 5.5 metres to link Paramanandal village near Chengam town to Amirthi zoo, covering a distance of 77.75 km. The widened stretch will have paved shoulders to provide durability to the carriageway and curb vehicles falling off into the valley.

The stretch will also have signages, reflectors, and road markings to ensure the safety of commuters. Blinkers and LED streetlights will be avoided in the stretch to allow free movement of wild animals at night.

The road straddles the thick reserve forest, stretching along a series of culverts and causeways in the hills.

The State Highways has identified around 16 culverts and five causeways on the route, especially near Amirthi zoo. These facilities will be re-built to allow the movement of vehicles, including buses, during monsoon. Currently, government buses are not operated on the route, while the Jamunamarathur-Polur stretch, courtesy of the good condition of the road, has bus connectivity.

Connectivity to the hills

At present, 232 tribal hamlets are located in the hills.

The existing two-lane bitumen stretch between Jamunamarathur and Polur town, 47 km from the hills, provides the much-needed connectivity to the hills for the tribals. The stretch, belonging to the Forest Department, is maintained by State Highways.

However, the narrow stretch between Jamunamarathur and Amirthi zoo, which is located on the foothills, continues to remain neglected.

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