**PRESS RELEASE**

SMEC rail division proudly part of the PRASA upgrade of rail stations

***15 August, 2013:*** *The rail division of internationally-recognised consultancy firm SMEC is currently involved in the upgrade of the KwaZulu-Natal-based Berea Rail Station – a project which forms a part of the state-owned Passenger Rail Association of South Africa (PRASA) Rolling Stock Renewal Programme.*

SMEC functional head of rail **Johan Stander** says that as part of PRASA’s long-term investment programme to upgrade and modernise its stations and rail network, PRASA identified several train stations that require upgrading and modernisation. SMEC South Africa’s railway division is currently involved in the Berea Rail Station Upgrade, whereby several structural considerations had to be taken into account.

According to Stander the new trains that have been acquired will be longer and travel at greater speeds than the trains that are currently in use, and therefore changes will need to be made to the train stations. Stander notes that the modernisation of the train stations would mean station designs to incorporate trading areas, as well as better access for the disabled.

Stander points out that part of PRASA’s strategy has been to identify smaller engineering firms to execute some of the work. “SMEC South Africa is well positioned to align with this strategy and to support the transfer of skills to these smaller firms. The working relationship is on a day to day basis, whereby SMEC South Africa conducts a professional review and advises on the work being executed,” explains Stander.

As part of the modernisation of the train stations, designs would have to comply with PRASA design standards, such as conforming to the minimum PRASA platform length of 275m. Another example is that station piles and columns for the deck of the station which would ultimately serve as retail space, have to be positioned in such a way as to not impact the existing track alignment.

In addition to the Berea Rail Station Upgrade, PRASA has identified several stations for improvement in Gauteng, including Mabopane, Pretoria, Germiston, Johannesburg and Naledi; in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), including Umlazi, Durban, KwaMashu and Bridge City; and in the Western Cape, including Khayelitsha and Kapteinsklip. These stations have been identified in terms of user-friendliness, navigation, ease of access for people with disabilities and higher-than-normal passenger numbers, besides other factors.

SMEC has more than 30 years of experience in local railway engineering consultancy services and has been involved in some of the largest railway projects in Africa. SMEC rail division is able to offer: planning and investigations, route selection and analysis, rail construction, rail operation and maintenance, and rail design.

***Ends.***

**Notes to the Editor**There are numerous photographs specific to this press release. Please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click the SMEC link.

**About SMEC**Australian based SMEC has more than 4 000 employees and an established network of over 60 offices worldwide. SMEC provides consultancy services for the lifecycle of a project to a broad range of sectors, which include; hydropower, transport, water, natural resources and environment, geotechnical, mining, tunnelling, urban development, renewable energy, power, government and advisory services and social infrastructure development. Following the merger with South African Vela VKE , the SMEC Group now has over 5 000 employees and an established network of over 70 offices in 36 countries throughout Australia, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific, North and South America.

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