**PRESS RELEASE**

SMEC rail division is on track for growth

***24 February, 2014:*** *Decades of in-depth experience and industry successes has resulted in the rail division of internationally recognised consultancy firm SMEC being selected to undertake a number of high profile projects, including the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) Rolling Stock Fleet Renewal Programme*.

The SMEC rail division offers a variety of specialised services, ranging from planning and feasibility studies, to managing design and construction. SMEC functional head of rail **Johan Stander** indicatesthat PRASA's new rolling stock will have a direct bearing on stations, which need to be upgraded in order to accommodate the new fleet and enhance the overall passenger experience.

"Under the current appointment, we are fortunate in the sense that the majority of our work is strategic advice to PRASA, and the ultimate cost of a new depot is defined by the technicalities involved in the design of that facility. At this stage, SMEC is not involved in design itself, however it does have a design review function," he explains.

SMEC boasts more than 30 years of experience in railway engineering consultancy services in South Africa. The company is able to supply a turnkey package tailored to suit the specific needs of a client due to its excellent capabilities. The SMEC rail division specialises in the construction of buildings, track and geotechnical services, as well as electrical and electronic engineering and communications.

According to Stander, SMEC has expanded its rail capacity locally over the past three years. “We now have 65 employees spread through our regional offices in South Africa that have expertise at numerous levels in the various disciplines required by the rail industry.”

Stander points out that SMEC has been involved with several major rail projects, one of which was the 21 km addition to the Ermelo-to-Richard’s Bay line from 1980 to 1990. He adds that many of the junior engineers who worked on this project are still with SMEC today. “Some of the engineers who were juniors at that time are still with the company and now form the senior management echelon.”

More recently, SMEC has been involved in furthering the aims of broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE) by increasing participation in the industry of those who were previously excluded. Stander stresses that SMEC recognises the importance of fostering new talent in the industry, and he highlights the company’s commitment to developing skills and to maintaining assets once they have been constructed. “It is our joint and individual responsibility to ensure that Africa benefits from our history and experience. At SMEC we have built up the experience and capability to offer unparalleled expertise to Africa’s rail networks,” he concludes.

***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**SMEC is a professional services firm with Australian origins and a global footprint that provides high-quality consultancy services on major infrastructure projects.  SMEC has over 5,100 employees and an established network of more than 70 offices in Australia, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and North and South America.

SMEC South Africa provides professional engineering services throughout South Africa and the rest of Africa in the following sectors: hydropower, transport, water, natural resources and environment, geotechnical, mining, tunnelling, urban development, renewable energy, power, government and advisory services and social infrastructure development.

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