

## Vashi bridge expansion, E-way bypass work to start in September

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MUMBAI: Key infrastructure projects that will make road travel to Pune, Goa, Bengaluru and further south smoother and faster will begin in September after the monsoon. They are expected to be over in four years.

L&T will build a six-lane bridge along the existing Vashi creek bridge to align with the recently widened (12-lane) Sion-Panvel highway. IL&FS and Afcons will build eight-lane tunnels and bridges, respectively, for the Mumbai-Pune expressway bypass between Khopoli and the Sinhagad institute to reduce congestion in the Lonavala ghat section.

The companies recently won the tenders and the formalities for issuing work orders will be over by September, said MSRDC officials. The state has extended the toll period on the Vashi creek bridge till 2036 and the Mumbai-Pune Expressway till 2045 to raise funds.

The 13-km bypass will separate traffic on the expressway and the old Pune highway that at the moment shares roads in the Lonavla ghat section and gets stuck in snarls, and reduce travel time between Mumbai and Pune by 25 minutes.

The expansion of the six-lane Vashi creek bridge by adding another six lanes will enhance its capacity and also cut down on congestion. The first Thane creek bridge at Vashi was built in 1973, but the two-lane bridge corroded soon. In 1987, the state government started a second bridge, which was thrown open in 1997. The maximum capacity of this bridge is 12,500 passenger car units (PCUs) per day, but 17,500 PCUs are using the bridge at present.