

Department of Transportation and Public Works to Rebuild the Island's Roads with \$299 Million from FEMA

Release Date: July 8, 2021

The removal and replacement of signs on the island's public roads is progressing with over 3,000 signs installed

GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico — To date, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has obligated nearly \$299 million to the Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTOP, by its Spanish acronym) to repair damage and optimize state roads and bridges. This includes nearly \$92 million approved during 2021 to address infrastructure in nearly 30 municipalities.

The obligations represent permanent work projects to address over 250 damaged areas across the island's roads and bridges.

"Together with the government of Puerto Rico, we are committed to helping repair, modernize and strengthen road safety on the island's highway network. Each project that receives a funding obligation from our agency brings us closer to that goal," said FEMA Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator José G. Baquero.

An element that deals with highway safety is the replacement and installation of thousands of road signs that were affected by Hurricane María. To that end, the Agency earmarked over \$28.3 million for a project to replace signs on 238 highways in Puerto Rico, extending 496 miles from San Juan to Aguadilla.

DTOP reported that over 300 signs and poles have been removed, while the installation of signs and plaques exceeds 3,000 units. The installation of signs in the Ponce and Guayama regions will begin soon, while the manufacturing of signs for the Humacao region continues. The production of road signage represents a positive impact on the manufacturing sector, since some are made by contractors in Humacao, Guayama, Mayagüez and Ponce.



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In addition, over \$3.5 million was allocated to repair several roads in the central part of the island. This obligation includes \$1.8 million to rebuild three segments of PR-612 in Utuado, including a three-span bridge that suffered severe damage and serves as the main road for residents of the Don Alonso and Caonillas Abajo neighborhoods. It also includes \$1.6 million to repair nine segments of PR-531 in Jayuya.

For his part, community leader and president of COSSAO, Francisco "Tito" J. Valentín Soto, said that these awards will not only help the communities of the Don Alonso and Caonillas Abajo neighborhoods, but will also help the town's economy. "This bridge and the roads are on the way to a large sector that gives access to Dos Bocas Lake, including the tourist area. In this area there is a parador known as Casa Grande, plus a cabin project is underway, both of which are important for recreational and economic activity in the community," added Valentín Soto.

Likewise, over \$4.7 million was allocated to DTOP to repair several sections of PR-742 and PR-738 in Cayey. Furthermore, repairs will be completed on the PR-7731 Road in Cidra which provides access to main roads and businesses for about 9,000 residents of the Carite, Vegas, Montellano and Quebrada Arriba neighborhoods.

To prevent landslides due to excessive rainfall, the existing embankment fill on these roads will be replaced with gabion walls. The work also includes the construction of concrete curbs and gutters, the replacement of drainage pipes, and the installation of several segments of guardrails. An allocation of about \$19,000 for mitigation works will allow for permanent solutions to be implemented and prevent similar damage.

"Commitment to the restoration of the main public roads is our north. Every day we face new challenges and we do not stop to achieve this and complete our established goals. We continue working tirelessly to provide thousands of drivers with safe roads in good condition, where they can reach their destinations without inconveniences," said DTOP Secretary Eileen M. Velez Vega.

Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, Executive Director of the Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), said that DTOP has approximately 21 auctions in process for the development of design phases, which represent an



investment of \$107 million in road infrastructure in various municipalities once construction begins. “The COR3 team will continue to work closely with DTOP staff to assist in the procedures related to these processes and ensure that the projects materialize,” Laboy Rivera said.

For more information on Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane María, please visit fema.gov/es/disaster/4339 and recuperacion.pr. Follow our social media pages at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and [Twitter @COR3pr](https://Twitter.com/COR3pr).



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