

# A.M. Costa Rica

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## Caldera highway gets construction go ahead at last

**By the A.M. Costa Rica staff**

Transport officials have given the much-awaited go ahead for the \$230 million San José-Caldera highway.

This means that Autopistas del Sol S.A., the concession holder for the project, has 30 months to complete the highway. The 77-km (48-mile) highway will decrease dramatically the travel time from the Central Valley to the Pacific coast.

The first stage of the job is the reconstruction of the existing highway from Parque La Sabana to Ciudad Colón. Much of the highway already is multi-lane.

The big job is a 39-km (24-mile) section from Ciudad Colón to Orotina. That highway is only graded roughly now, although bridges are in place. The third and final step is improvements of the highway from the Orotina interchange to the Puerto de Caldera at Puntarenas.

Autopistas del Sol will have the right to collect tolls for 25 years to offset the investment.

The Ministerio de Obras Públicas y Transportes said that employees worked during the holidays to make sure all the requirements were in place for the start of construction.

Autopistas finally got all its financial commitments in order four days before Christmas, and a company official asked to be allowed to start work a week ago.

During the holidays transport ministry workers said they got final approvals from the Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía, reviewed and approved plans and did the paperwork so that the company would not have to pay taxes on imported equipment. Environmental approval was needed because Autopista will take gravel from several deposits along the route.

Ministry workers also had to coordinate with the Compañía Nacional de Fuerza y Luz, the Instituto Costarricense de Acueductos y Alcantarillados and the Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad for moving water and sewer lines, electric lines and telephone cables, they said.