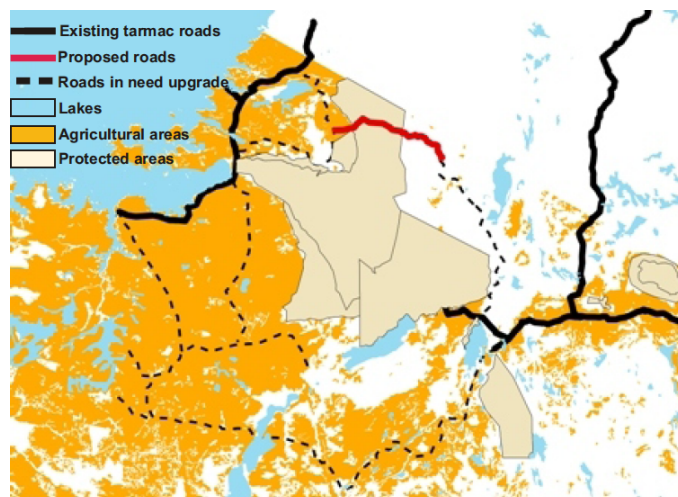


Proposed public road through the Serengeti

The Serengeti National Park in Tanzania is a unique wilderness harbouring perhaps the most spectacular terrestrial wildlife migration on earth. Its great significance has been recognized through its designation both as a national park in Tanzania and as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Tanzania has previously had an outstanding record of commitment to biodiversity conservation, and the Serengeti is one of four UNESCO world heritage nature reserves in the country. However this internationally significant and unique wildlife heritage is currently threatened by a proposal to construct a new public road through the park. This road would bisect the north of the park, and carry commercial traffic directly through the annual migration of nearly two million wildebeest and zebra.

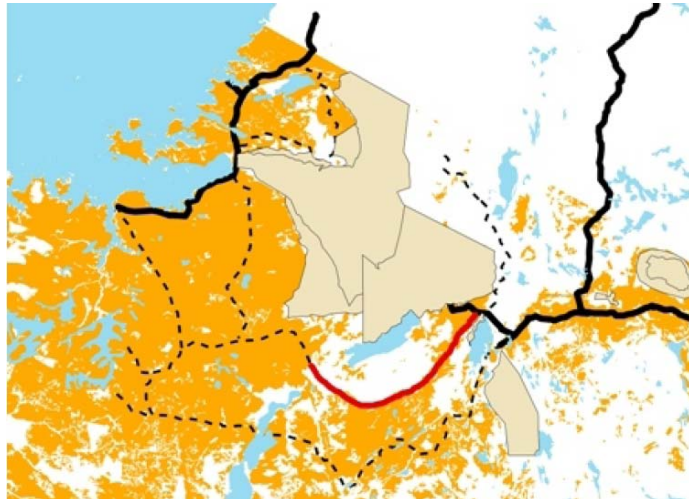
ZSL fully recognizes that Tanzania’s people have a right to improvements in infrastructure, which would provide people and industries with greater access to markets and productive resources, thereby promoting economic growth and development. We also agree that infrastructure development between the East African coast and Lake Victoria is much needed. We are, however, extremely concerned by the location of the proposed road, which we believe will adversely impact the wilderness values for which the Serengeti is globally renowned. Public roads through protected areas can have catastrophic effects on wildlife and seriously degrade the environment. The proposed Serengeti road will pass through the dry season migration route of nearly two million animals, and will inevitably result in large numbers of wildlife and human casualties. The Serengeti is critically important for attracting wildlife tourism to Tanzania which generates a substantial proportion of the country’s foreign revenue, and hence degradation of the Serengeti could also result in potentially serious economic costs to Tanzania. ZSL believes that alternative routes passing south of the Serengeti protected area system, such as those recommended by FZS and AWF, would allow Tanzania to improve its infrastructure without compromising the unique biodiversity values of the Serengeti.

The proposed road through the Serengeti national park will be routed through mostly arid and undeveloped areas close to the Kenyan border, as well as through the Park (Map A). This route would connect relatively few agricultural areas and industries and would not only disrupt the park, but also other important and ecologically sensitive habitats, such as Lake



Map A Proposed route through the Serengeti

Natron (a RAMSAR site). However, a new road passing south of the Serengeti would not only provide the same regional linkages between the coast and the lake, but would pass through some of Tanzania's most productive agricultural land, enabling access for many more people. It would therefore provide greater development benefits as well as have less impact on wildlife (Map B).



Map B Proposed alternative route south of the Serengeti National Park.

We therefore respectfully ask the Tanzanian government to reconsider the proposed public road through the Serengeti on the following grounds:

1. The inherent value of the Serengeti as an intact wilderness

A commercial public road through one of the world's most spectacular ecosystems will degrade the value of the Serengeti as an intact wilderness. The Serengeti is a World Heritage site – the proposed public road would clearly not satisfy operational guideline 119 'The State Party and partners must ensure that ... sustainable use does not adversely impact the outstanding universal value, integrity and/or authenticity of the property.'

2. Impact of the road on the spectacular Serengeti migration and associated biodiversity

The Serengeti harbours one of the world's last remaining large mammal migrations, in which nearly two million animals move from the south and east of the park north into Kenya. When the migration passes through an area there is a constant stream of wildebeest and zebra, and it can take days for the animals to pass. It is easy to imagine the carnage of animals if this migration intersects with a trans-Africa highway. The Serengeti is also home to some of the world's most significant large carnivore populations, including one of the world's largest cheetah populations in a protected area. Roads have been identified as a threat to cheetah in the regional conservation strategy for this species, whilst any loss or reduction in the migration would have impacts on the populations of all large carnivores.

3. Impact of the road on road accidents and human fatalities

Tanzania already has one of the highest rates of human fatalities from road accidents in Africa, and this road will only serve to make this regrettable statistic worse. A road crossing an ecosystem harbouring some of the highest large mammal densities in the world will result in collisions between vehicles and animals, and will inevitably lead to considerable and unacceptable levels of human fatalities. Fencing will be the only way to reduce human fatalities. However, fencing would cut off access for the migratory animals to the critically important dry season water resources supplied by the Mara River. Fencing is known to have

led to the collapse of another spectacular migration of wildebeest in the Kalahari, and would, in all likelihood, also lead to the demise of the Serengeti migration.

Impact of the road on illegal resource extraction

All across the world, increased access provided by roads has been demonstrated to result in increases in illegal resource extraction. This is particularly significant in areas of high biodiversity, and can have catastrophic results. The Serengeti already suffers from increasing impacts of illegal bushmeat extraction on its boundaries, and a public road through it will further exacerbate these impacts.

4. Overall impact of the road on Tanzania's economy

Any loss of the migration or reduction in large carnivore biodiversity caused by the road will threaten the tourism income of both Tanzania and Kenya, with consequent impacts on economic growth of both countries. Tourism makes a significant contribution to the Tanzanian economy, comprising 25% of Tanzania's total foreign revenue in 2005. The Serengeti ecosystem is Tanzania's number one attraction because of its famous migration, and hence any degradation of this ecosystem would have significant impacts on Tanzania's economy as well as its biodiversity.

5. Impact of the road on Tanzania's neighbour, Kenya

Any development affecting the Serengeti ecosystem will have impacts on its neighbour, Kenya, which harbours the Mara River which provides the water source that drives the migration. A reduction in the migration in the Serengeti would lead to impacts on the Maasai Mara and bordering wildlife areas, with consequent impacts on tourism and the Kenyan economy.

6. The existence of a viable alternative southern route which could provide more benefits to people

There is a viable alternative route to the south, and this option needs to be explored fully. The southern route passes through an area which is much more densely populated and harbours many more important agricultural areas, than the proposed Serengeti route (Map B). A road through this region would provide farmers with better access to markets, where they can sell and access agricultural goods at competitive prices. A road that can provide this access to more people, in addition to providing the much needed linkages between the coast and Lake Victoria, will have a greater overall impact on Tanzania's economic development.

Any road between the East African coast and Lake Victoria will provide an important alternative route between the coast and Africa's hinterland. It will therefore attract heavy commercial vehicles, and traffic is likely to be substantial. ZSL fully supports Tanzania's endeavours to improve its infrastructure and develop linkages between the coast and its interior and with its neighbours. However, the Serengeti ecosystem is one of Tanzania's most valuable and spectacular natural assets, and therefore ZSL opposes a public road through the Serengeti, and supports the development of alternative routes passing to the south of the Serengeti ecosystem. ZSL believes that Tanzania can improve its infrastructure while continuing to safeguard its biodiversity, thereby deriving greater economic benefit overall.