



## Long deferred "Apartheid Road" said to be nearing launch within year

Today *Israel Hayom* reported that the Israeli authorities – presumably the Ministry of Transportation – has approved a budget to prepare the opening of the northernmost section of the Eastern Ring Road (see yellow road between Anata and E-1 [on map](#)).

Also known as the “Apartheid Road” – a reference to the model Separation Barrier in its middle designed to isolate settler traffic from Palestinian traffic – this key infrastructure project is one of [several developments necessary for preparing the ground for E-1](#).

The road was the brainchild of former prime minister Ariel Sharon, responding to the problem of E-1 bifurcating the north from the south of the West Bank. It would enable navigation from Ramallah to Bethlehem for Palestinians but without any access to Jerusalem – a nonstarter for negotiations given the imperative of locating a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem.

At the same time, the road will ease access to the city for settlers from the area around Ramallah by connecting internal roads to Road 1 (Jerusalem-Ma’ale Adumim). It will link to the Mount Scopus Tunnel Road through another E-1 related development - the Zeitim interchange, construction on which was launched just several months ago. Settlers have long exerted pressure to open the road, complaining about traffic jams and delays. In fact, the road will not only expedite the flow of traffic to Jerusalem from the settlements northeast of the city but will also enable expansion of the settlement bloc around Ramallah.

The contractor in charge of the project reportedly met with officials last week to receive final instructions for completing the road. The budget is anticipated to include money for construction of a checkpoint, linkage of the road to the Zeitim interchange, and road repairs for a major infrastructure project long built but up until now suspended. According to the report, it is projected to be open to traffic within 10 months.

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