

## Egnatia Odos Project

Kozani and Thessaloniki, Greece

November 2001

### **Client:**

Egnatia Odos  
Society  
Anonymous  
Highway  
Authority

### **Project Value:**

\$1.8 billion

### **Project**

#### **Duration:**

1996–2005

### **Parsons'**

#### **Services:**

Construction management, quality assurance and quality control, health and safety assurance, implementation of environmental requirements, report on expropriation procedures, constructability review, scheduling and cost control, design review, document control, and transition of project to owner

Egnatia Odos, which translates to “Roman Road” is, in effect, the recreation of the ancient Roman highway, Via Egnatia. Constructed in the second century BC, Via Egnatia’s 800 kilometers connected the center of the Roman Empire in Southern Europe to Asia and Africa. The Egnatia Odos project is one of the largest highway projects under construction in Europe today. The highway provides direct access to Central Europe through the western port of Igoumenitsa, passes through Thessaloniki (the main northern city and port in north central Greece), and finally connects directly to Istanbul through the town of Kipi on the Turkish border. Nine major vertical axes provide links to Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Bulgaria, and Turkey. The overall highway construction, spanning 682 kilometers, is connected by a four- and six-lane modern, limited-access motorway that links five ports, eight airports, and perpendicular road axes providing access to the neighboring Balkans and the rest of Eastern Europe.

In addition to Greek Government and European Investment Bank funding, the Egnatia Odos project is being developed using

European Union (EU) funding, which normally requires work be performed by European engineering and construction firms. However, because of the technical complexity of the Egnatia Odos project, the



nationality provisions of the EU tendering rules were waived, thus opening the project to international competition. Parsons was selected to provide construction management services for the central section of the new, limited-access, high-speed tollway across Northern Greece. The central section represents a key strategic link in the regional economic corridor being created by the Egnatia Odos, which will be the only high-speed highway traversing Northern Greece from its western to its eastern border. As a part of the European Intercontinental Transportation Network, the Egnatia Odos will open commerce in the remote areas of Northern Greece and developing countries of the Balkans and Black Sea region through the interconnecting links provided by the vertical axis highways.

The infrastructure required to carry the Egnatia Odos across the countryside makes this project one of the most interesting projects in Greece today.

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*Archaeologists excavating a cemetery along the main axis of the Egnatia Odos outside the Kozani region*

- *189 large bridges totaling 40 kilometers in length*
- *50 tunnels with a combined length of over 42 kilometers*
- *353 overbridges/underpasses*
- *720 kilometers of side service roads*
- *35 major interchange*

There are a number of roads, most with only two lanes, in the mountains of Northern Greece that do not conform to any international standards. The Egnatia Odos, which is being constructed on a new alignment traversing Northern Greece through expropriated land, is the first highway in Greece to be designed and built in accordance with international motorway standards. The highway is relatively straight and flat with gentle slopes and curves, which required tunneling through mountains and building bridges over valleys and rivers. The central section, which starts at sea level, is the most technically challenging of the sections due to the rough, mountainous terrain between Vergina and Grevena/Panagia. In addition to standard road construction experience, Parsons brings to the Egnatia Odos project over 80 years of bridge and tunneling expertise, including work on more than 4,700 bridges and over 11,000 kilometers of highways.

Because the new alignment crosses extensive historical areas dating back well before the time of Phillip II, the father of Alexander the Great, Parsons is monitoring archaeological site clearance and review. The central section passes near the palace and tomb of Phillip II, and parts of the corridor are near Macedonian tombs from the time of Alexander the Great. St. Paul also visited this area, resulting in his "Letters to the Thessalonians" in the Bible. Some of the earlier sites between the regions of Kozani and Veria date to 1,000 BC, and archaeologists are finding many items of historical significance. During much of the

excavation, archeologists stand by the shovels looking into the dig for evidence of historical objects. Due to the historical significance of the area, archaeologists have the authority to stop the project to salvage valuable artifacts. To date, several sections of the road have been delayed for over 2 years while teams of archeologists excavated Roman, Macedonian, and Iron Age cemeteries by hand.

Parsons' construction management services for the Egnatia Odos Central Region Highway project consist of supervising the work of 15 separate contracts and managing the design and constructability reviews for the 240 kilometers of new four- and six-lane divided highway.

In addition to financial control and approval of all contractors' payments, Parsons is reviewing geotechnical studies and performing field site supervision and quality assurance/quality control. Current work efforts are expected to expand over the next two years to include simultaneously supervising up to 21 separate construction contracts and utilizing a technical engineering staff of expatriates and Greeks exceeding 100 people.

The Egnatia Odos will contribute greatly to the development of Greece by providing opportunities for new investment in the areas of transport, tourism, and industry. The modern highway network being built will provide an alternative, high-standard export corridor that will forever modify the economic integration of this region by uniting the economic zone that includes Albania, Bulgaria, and the Balkans to the industrial centers of Eastern and Western Europe. Considering the size, location, and economic significance promised by the Egnatia Odos, this project can be considered one of the most important and visible projects under construction in Europe today.