



**MEDIA STATEMENT BY MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY
AND LIAISON MR BHEKI CELE AT A MEDIA BRIEFING HELD IN DURBAN
TRURO HOUSE ON THURSDAY 31 JULY 2008 AT 9AM ADDRESSING A
CHALLENGE FACING PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN THE PROVINCE**

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media I thank you for attending today's briefing which comes amid a challenging and troublesome period within the public transport sector in the province. This obviously is informed by the recent acts of violence and intimidation which has resulted in the death of innocent commuters and taxi operators. This has indeed caused instability and has further compromised safety of our commuters in areas like Umzinyathi, Cato Manor, Chesterville, Zwelibomvu, KwaNdengezi and other areas in which we will be intervening decisively with an aim of restoring law and order and maintaining public safety.

Public transport facilities and routes are a public entity and not a shooting game park therefore ladies and gentlemen as government we will do everything in our power to maintain law and order and furthermore advance our strategic objectives of providing a public transport system that is efficient, effective, safe, reliable and affordable.

As we are all aware of the fact that there has been an internal conflict amongst the members of the Mpumalanga Taxi Association which has led to many operators getting seriously injured, killed and compromising the public safety of all transport road users serviced by this association. There have been numerous

interventions that my office has made in trying to resolve this conflict however despite these interventions this impulse remains unresolved. Flowing from the last meeting I had with the association last night (30/07/08) at Mpumalanga police station in an attempt to find a long lasting peace solution to this matter. Once again the association failed dismally to rise above their petty internal issues and put the interest of the commuters and the people of Mpumalanga first.

In light of this and in my discharge of my constitutional obligations bestowed upon me by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa I then directed them to cease all taxi operations with effect from 31/07/08 in order to restore law and order and maintain public safety and spare the lives of our innocent people.

Following this decision I was then contacted by various community leaders of Mpumalanga Township and beyond who had asked to assist government in finding a solution to this crisis situation. I then decided to allow any form of mediation from these leaders with an aim of easing the pressure that the people of Mpumalanga and the commuters at large might suffer when the taxi operation are closed down.

It is my considerable view that nobody derives any joy from any taxi route closure - to this effect I then allowed this mediation process which will also include consultation with relevant stakeholders' e.g. Community of Mpumalanga Township and surroundings to find an amicable peace solution to this matter. I have decided to give this mediation process another seven day period failing which we will have no other alternative but to close down the Mpumalanga taxi operations for an indefinite period.

In conclusion Ladies and gentlemen of the media our mandate as a department is to ensure safety for all passengers and road users in general. We will therefore not allow any individual or group to exercise their unruly behavior which in turn destabilizes operations and also lead to unnecessary deaths. We will continue to ensure that all those who are culprits of these violent acts will face the might of the law.

ENDS

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