



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU - NATAL - ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU - NATALI

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

UMNYANGO WEZOKUTHUTHA

MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR BHEKI CELE AT MEDIA BRIEFING ON THE SUPENSION OF SA ROADLINK OPERATIONS IN THE PROVINCE OF KWAZULU- NATAL – HELD AT ELANGENI HOTEL IN DURBAN ON WEDNESDAY 17 DECEMBER 2008.

The province of KwaZulu – Natal has over the years created a lasting legacy in road safety promotion and extensive zero tolerance law enforcement operations, it is on that score that as government we cannot keep quiet and fold our arms when our people are being slaughtered by public transport operators.

As government we have a legislative mandate of ensuring the safety of our citizens in the province by providing a public transport system that is safe, affordable, efficient and effective hence all our strategies and operations are geared towards achieving these fundamental goals.

In the last four days we have lost 33 lives in our province in accidents involving public transport. However the most troublesome of them all is an ever increasing rate of fatal accidents involving buses belonging to SA Road Link. Stated below are the alarming incidences involving SA Road link since 2006 in KwaZulu-Natal:

- In December 2006 - 9 SA Roadlink buses were suspended for being unroadworthy
- In December 2006 – SA Roadlink bus was suspended at Park Rynie RTI after the driver drove the bus for about 1500 km from Cape Town to Durban after being involved in a collision at Beaufort West.
- On the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 2006 – SA Roadlink bus collided into a bridge on the N3 south bound near Liberty Mall where 12 passengers were killed.
- In December 2006 driver of SA Roadlink bus was arrested for drinking and driving at Marianhill toll plaza and was well over the limit

- On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2008 – SA Roadlink bus overturned on the N3 South Bound near Paradise Valley – 43 people were injured
- On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December – SA Roadlink collided into a stationery bus on the N3 south Balgovan – 13 people were critically injured
- On the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2008 – SA Roadlink bus was suspended at Mkondeni testing grounds for being unroadworthy
- On the 16<sup>th</sup> of December – SA Roadlink bus collided into rear of a truck and collided head on into a Toyota Camry killing 11 people ( 6 were members of the same family)
- On the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2008 – SA Roadlink bus was suspended at Ladysmith RTI for being unroadworthy
- On the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2008 – SA Roadlink bus broke down at 5am and passengers were stranded until 8pm (15 hours)

In light of the above as the KwaZulu Natal Province we withdraw all the concurrencies granted to SA Road Link to operate in this Province pending finalization of investigation into whether or not the statutory duties of the Province enjoin the Province to permit the operation of Road Link inside the Province, consideration being given to issues of the safety of public transport passengers.

SA Road Link should not ply any route in the Province of KwaZulu Natal with immediate effect pending the finalization of the investigation into whether or not the operation of SA Road Link is conducive for the safe public transport in this Province. The department of Transport is fully aware of the implications this decision may have on SA Road Link but is equally constrained to fulfill its obligations towards ensuring that, users of public transport in KwaZulu Natal continue to be safe and that it take necessary steps to investigate matters pertaining to Road traffic collisions, without necessarily imputing blameworthiness on the operator until finalization of the investigation.

In this regard the investigation will be conducted urgently in order to strike any necessary balance between the private interest of the operator and the safety of the public transport users.

Meanwhile, as the Department of Transport we have introduced stringent measures to deal with the public transport operators accordingly in curbing the accelerating rate of

fatal accidents in the province, this follows the death of 21 people in three separate accidents within 24 hrs in KwaZulu-Natal. Hence on Monday I had a meeting with the leadership of the taxi industry and law enforcement management in addressing the matter.

In executing the rigorous measures our traffic officers will confiscate and or impound all public transport vehicles found over speeding, overloaded and unroadworthy this is in accordance with the laws governing the regulation of Public Transport particularly the KwaZulu- Natal Public Transport Act of 2005 which makes it an offense to operate or undertake public transport services without an operating license or contrary to the terms and conditions of that particular operating license.

In closing, since the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2008 to date we have lost 58 people in our province in comparison to 116 fatalities during the same period last year, for this reason we would like to further urge all our motorists to 'Just do right 'on the road and be 100% compliance – one death is one too many – Be safe and stay alive.

I thank you