



**MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY
SAFETY AND LIAISON MR BHEKI CELE ON THE BUS OPERATIONS OF
ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY AT A MEDIA BRIEFING HELD IN DURBAN
TRURO HOUSE AT 7H30 AM ON TUESDAY 21 JULY 2009**

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, I thank you for attending today's press briefing which comes amid a challenging period within the bus operations of EThekwini Municipality following the sudden termination of an existing contract between the City of Ethekeeni and Remant Alton which was due to expire in October 2010. This obviously is informed by the operational challenges that were encountered by Remant Alton.

The Cabinet Task Team, the Mayor, and City and Provincial officials have been working around the clock in an effort to get the Durban Transport services restored as soon as possible since the closure of Remant Alton effective from 29

June 2009. The inconvenience, unnecessary suffering and torture caused to all commuters during this period is sincerely regretted.

As government we operate under a clear legislative mandate of providing a public transport system that is affordable, safe, reliable, efficient and effective in the province. Therefore we cannot compromise any of these elements hence we cannot allow any process that would any way suggest to hold our commuters in ransom.

We operate under an open door policy and exercise democracy in processes of negotiations aimed at finding amicable solutions to any challenges. There has been an enormous public outcry on this matter where a number of commuters particularly workers and scholars were left stranded due to the operational challenges that were encountered by Remant Alton. To this end we cannot allow our commuters to suffer any further and decisive actions on this matter becomes imperative.

Government made a commitment to commence with the bus operations when the school re-opens, unfortunately this did not materialized due to court processes and labour issues which needed to be given appropriate platform.

Yesterday there was an urgent application in court for an interdict restraining the alternate operator from commencing operations, and further requesting for a review in the process of appointing the said company.

EThekweni Municipality and KZN Department of Transport were co respondents in the application, which was accordingly opposed. The applicants after being served with the answering affidavits opposing their application opted not to proceed with the application for an interdict. The matter was adjourned to an opposed roll on Monday 26 October 2009 on which date review will be argued and other points taken by the respondents.

Emergency provisions of the existing contract were used for the appointment of an alternative operator for the Durban Transport service by the Province in order to restore the service without further delay..

Negotiations between Trade Unions representatives, SATAWU and TAWUSA and government are at an advance stage and progressing positively towards finding a long lasting solution. As government we sympathies with the sore issue of job losses, in as much as it is our point of departure but reality needs to prevail and issues be addressed accordingly. In light of this, the decision to resume

operations will be finalised on Thursday this week once issues of recruitment and other operational issues are addressed by all parties involved.

Last night the meeting which lasted for more than five hours identified other outstanding issues that will be addressed by all respective parties. Hence today there will be a meeting between Union representatives and workers but further there will another meeting with the Unions, Government and the new operator to resolve outstanding issues.

Government is confident that an alternative operator Tansnat Africa PTY LTD is an experienced operator with a very good track record in KwaZulu Natal in particular for the running of bus services.

A reality is that with the reduced subsidy funding available it has been necessary to reduce the number of buses and the number of trips in the new service to match the existing funding. A further reality is that it is necessary to terminate the Durban Transport bus services in some areas, but they will be provided with alternative public transport by minibus taxis or small bus operators.

Although we are forced to reduce the service to match the available subsidy funds, the quality of the service will be good as far as standard of buses, adherence to timetables, etc is concerned.

It must be emphasized that this is just a holding operation to restore a good Durban Transport service to October 2010 and to take us beyond the 2010 World Cup. After October 2010 a new Phase 2 operations will be introduced which will involve the restructure of the existing operation into one aligned to the Integrated Public Transport Network (as per National policy). This will take a longer period of time for the implementation details to be finalized, and will involve consultation with all stakeholders.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen of the media, our mandate as government is to provide a transportation system that addresses the needs of our commuters and furthermore promote public participation in all matters of governance. The EThekweni Municipality, Provincial and National Department of Transport will be meeting to further explore if there could be ways including financial assistance to improve the quality of operations which is over and above the subsidy that is being provided.

There is a sub committee that will work on finding the long lasting and permanent solution in this regard to ensure that the people of Ethekewini Municipality are not faced with such challenges in the near future.

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