



transport

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MEDIA LIAISON AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

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MEC MCHUNU INTRODUCED NEW INITIATIVE TO FAST-TRACK ISSUING OF OPERATING LICENCES TO RESTORE ORDER AND STABILITY IN THE TAXI INDUSTRY

Empangeni – KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Mr. Willies Mchunu, launched a new initiative to fast-track the issuing of operating licences in the public transport industry at district level today.

Mchunu opened the first new fully equipped regional offices in Empangeni as part of his department's programme to decentralise the application and issuing processes of operating licences and permits. The Empangeni office will service UThungulu, Umkhanyakude and parts of Zululand districts.

Another office has also begun to function in Ladysmith, all as part of efforts by the provincial government to end conflict and to bring stability to the taxi industry.

Previously, taxi operators across the province had to travel to Pietermaritzburg to apply for operating licenses and enquire about any matters relating to documentations. Therefore, these new offices will reduce the distance travelled by operators and the costs involved.

The opening of these two new offices is part of the implementation of the resolutions of the Provincial Taxi Indaba, which was held in September 2012 in Durban.

This historic opening by MEC Mchunu was witnessed by members of the Legislature who serve in the Transport portfolio committee, Santaco, Kwanabuco, uMhlatuze and uThungulu district leadership. The Indaba resolved that as part of ensuring stability in the taxi industry, government must investigate means to improve the process of issuing operating licences.

Slow pace in the issuing of operating licences was identified as one of the sources of tensions and violence – especially where illegal operators continue to operate with no authority or legal documentation.

Addressing well over 1 000 operators at Imbizo Conference Centre, in Empangeni, MEC Mchunu expressed optimism that the opening of regional offices will restore dignity in the taxi industry and reduce incidents of violence.

"This is part of the implementation of the Taxi Indaba resolutions. The opening of these regional offices is an indication that when we convene summits we are serious about consultation. This is a product of our engagements with the taxi industry and we hope it will strengthen peace and stability in the taxi industry. This will also provide clarity and eliminate illegal operators in the industry. As government we are serious about bringing services closer to the people," said MEC Mchunu.

The new service centres will also offer services to taxi operators, bus operators, meter taxi operators, tourist operators and scholar transport operators.

Speaking at this gathering, Santaco provincial Chairperson, Boy Zondi welcomed the decentralisation of offices, saying this will smooth processes for operators.

“We have long been praying for this to happen and today this has become a reality. We are proud as the industry to have a leadership that is serious about improving the conditions of the taxi industry,” said Zondi.

Ends.

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