

MEC MCHUNU UNVEILS 52 GRADERS TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF RURAL ROADS IN KZN

The KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Mr. Willies Mchunu, unveiled 52 new graders today (Friday, 30 October 2015), which have been purchased by the department to improve the quality of gravel roads in the province's rural communities.

The new graders will be used to maintain more than **23 960 kilometres** of gravel roads under the Department of Transport's provincial road network.

In the last five years, the department upgraded **457 kilometres** of gravel to tar roads, beating a target of **397 kilometres**. It also rehabilitated or re-tarred **1, 859 kilometres**, resealed more than 10 million square metres of the road network. Furthermore, **1, 569 kilometres** of new gravel roads were constructed with **28 vehicle** and **61 pedestrian bridges**.

There are 30 graders delivered today in Mountain Rise, Pietermaritzburg, from local manufacturing company, Bell Equipment, and there will be an extra 22 graders from Volvo, bringing the total to 52 graders.

The move by the department to purchase grader machines manufactured in the country is in support of local supplier development in line with the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Provincial Growth and Development Plan (PGDP).

More than 365 posts of grader operators have been filled by the department, and more than 222 new posts are currently planned as part of speeding up service delivery in needy communities.

Through the partnership with Bell, prospective grader operators have been absorbed through the skills development and learnership programme.

Addressing stakeholders, including Umgungundlovu District and uMsunduzi Local municipalities' mayors, councillors, Amakhosi, Rural Roads Transportation Forums, Bell Equipment management and staff, and the department's grader operators; MEC Mchunu announced that more R122 million has been injected into purchasing the graders.

"The arrival of the new graders will improve the quality of rural roads in the province. Moving forward we are going to invest in opening more access roads and eradicate potholes in rural roads. We will partner with local manufacturing companies to grow the economy and create more sustainable jobs. If we don't promote local companies, then we'll have only ourselves to blame. In the next financial year we will be purchasing an additional 36 graders," said MEC Mchunu.

"This partnership is quite unique and forms part of our responsible corporate citizenship in KwaZulu-Natal. Through these graders, we pledge our support to this strategic and positive partnership, and the department's commitment to purchasing locally will surely help create sustainable local jobs," said Mr. Bokkie Coetzee, from Bell Equipment.

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