

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
KWAZULU-NATAL
UMNYANQO WELUKUTHATHA



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REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY

Part 2

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY

The year 2001/2002 has proved to be a turbulent year in the World economy and in particular the transport sector. The events of 11 September 2001 had a dramatic impact on transport insurance costs and the price of fuel. In addition the exacerbated slowdown in the economy of the United States of America contributed to a deterioration in the World economy.

Although the South African economy weathered the global storm well, the shift from labour absorptive industries such as mining and agriculture to manufacturing and tourism has resulted in a continued loss of employment opportunities in the formal economy. Consequently a recent report by Statistics South Africa calculated that one million jobs were lost between February 2001 and September 2001. Here it is important to appreciate that not only is our economy shedding jobs but that our economic growth rate is not creating sufficient new job opportunities to absorb new market entrants. Factually, only 5 to 7 percent of matriculants who pass matric will be absorbed by our formal economy.

Structural unemployment in South Africa, which has deepened over the past decade, is a condition that is most severely felt in those provinces that have a large rural population. Therefore, we as government must now confront a situation in which the majority of our citizens are considered poor, and living below the minimum living level. Living in poverty leaves a permanent mark even on those who manage to survive.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport has a deserved reputation for designing programmes and utilising budgets to ensure that previously disenfranchised communities gain a more credible stake in our economy. We have always championed the view that economic disadvantage occurs within the context of social disadvantage. We have accordingly developed economic empowerment and targeted procurement programmes within the wider development context of integration, renewal, job creation, poverty alleviation, gender, training and skills transfer. We have always championed the view that, as long as the majority of our citizens are poor, our hard won democratic freedom will be meaningless.

Annual reports provide a valuable opportunity for review. For government departments in South Africa this review must necessarily go beyond reporting on progress made by government as a regulatory body and service provider to include our contribution to the creation of a more representative economy.

Our Annual Report will focus, therefore, on the extent to which the transport portfolio has been used to:

- accelerate the transformation of KwaZulu-Natal society,
- contribute towards the creation of the wealth of our province and our country but particularly within poor communities,
- redistribute opportunities within the transport sector,
- address the priority needs of stakeholders and build the capacity of impoverished communities to engage the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport effectively.

Our Annual Report will draw heavily on the findings of an independent social impact assessment of our Roads for Rural Development programme and our Road to Wealth and Job Creation Initiative. This study was conducted by Afridata Research in conjunction with Research International. Further, the Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU), University of Cape Town, has conducted an independent review of our Zibambele programme (a poverty alleviation programme focussing on women headed households).

Both of these studies provide irrefutable evidence to demonstrate that improved access through the Roads for Rural Development programme and the injection of cash into impoverished communities through the Road to Wealth and Job Creation Initiative are starting to bear fruit both for the contractors concerned and for the market economy of the province.

Although the programmes associated with the Road to Wealth and Job Creation Initiative are relatively new, we now have irrefutable evidence that we have created sustainable opportunities which are sufficiently significant to begin absorbing a rural labour force that has been increasingly marginalized by the productivity requirements of the global market economy. The findings on our Vukuzakhe (the staged emerging contractor programme) and Zibambele

programmes endorse that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport is on track in delivering sustainable solutions to rural poverty, rural unemployment and entrepreneurial development which stimulate rural economic growth by creating a more favourable investment environment, increasing local disposable income and reducing geographic poverty gaps.

This is particularly pleasing in as much as the studies were conducted prior to the implementation of the African Renaissance Road Upgrading Programme, which has undoubtedly geared up wealth creation in beneficiary communities. Increasingly, Local Government has been pushed into the front line of government's war on poverty. Our African Renaissance Road Upgrading Programme is specifically designed to enhance co-operation between all three spheres of government in the interests of efficient and effective service delivery.

We have also made considerable progress in regulating the taxi industry and in reorienting its economic interests towards greater diversification. This will undoubtedly make the taxi industry more economically viable as it would no longer be wholly dependent on fares and routes. The Provincial Taxi Council is now fully operational and we look forward to a fruitful relationship with them to ensure both safe and affordable public transport and the growth of the taxi industry in KwaZulu-Natal.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport has pioneered many innovative strategies in its endeavour to create a safe road environment through the annual reduction of road crashes. The Department is well known for its dedicated commitment to adopting a Zero Tolerance enforcement programme together with a community education and awareness campaign. Our Zero Tolerance enforcement programme is administered by the KwaZulu-Natal Road Traffic Inspectorate (RTI) while community awareness and education is effected through our Road Safety Directorate.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport has met with senior personnel from the South African Police Services, the South African National Defence Force and the Director of Public Prosecutions in KwaZulu-Natal to discuss ways of ending the violence on provincial and national roads. We are now considering the establishment of dedicated traffic courts in co-operation with the Public Prosecutor's office. This is expected to streamline the adjudication of traffic offences and give teeth to our Zero Tolerance campaign. The RTI are to be congratulated on their continued commitment to eradicate fraud in the issuing of drivers licences and vehicle roadworthy certificates, as well as the dramatic reduction of overloading of vehicles on heavily trafficked national and provincial routes.

Although road crashes and road fatalities are still high, they are nonetheless decreasing. It is clear that our combined Zero Tolerance and Asiphephe programmes are having the desired effect. Our efforts to educate the community at large have been boosted by the establishment of Community Road Safety Councils in rural and disadvantaged urban communities. The commitment to outsource critical Community Road Safety Awareness work to Zibambele-like contracts at the local level will undoubtedly enhance the status of Road Safety Awareness campaigns in local communities. Not only will this create much needed employment, it will also spread the gospel that road safety is everyone's business.

The progress made this year has been very considerable despite the fact that the transport sector was badly affected by the slowdown in the World economy and by the tragic events of 11 September 2001. We are, I believe, making progress on all fronts and are playing a critical role in the transformation of KwaZulu-Natal.