



Igalelo

Official newsletter of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport

February/March 2005

Commuter safety is not negotiable, says MEC



Mpumalanga Taxi Association chairperson Bheki Thusi signs the agreement. Witnessing the signing ceremony at the Assegai Hotel are Pinetown Taxi Association chairperson Mandla Nene left, MEC Bheki Cele and KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport CEO Dr. Kwazi Mbanjwa.

The safety of commuters and residents will not be compromised, said Transport, Community Safety and Liaison MEC, Bheki Cele, on the lifting of the ban on the Mpumalanga and Pinetown taxi associations recently.

In the middle of last month Cele took the drastic measure of banning both associations from operating after route negotiations between the two collapsed. The latest collapse of talks sparked fears that the low intensity war being waged between the feuding camps would escalate into further violence. The feud has already claimed several lives.

Cele, who heads the Transport and Community Safety and Liaison Departments, warned both associations that failure to resolve the conflict within three months would result in both associations being expelled by the Taxi Registrar. An upbeat Cele, flanked

by the Mpumalanga Taxi Association chairman Bheki Thusi, Pinetown Taxi Association chairman Mandla Nene and Transport CEO Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa recently

emerged from fresh talks to announce the lifting of the ban, saying that an "amicable solution has been agreed to". "It is my pleasure to announce, that, indeed, the

Mpumalanga and Pinetown Taxi Associations have reached consensus on the topical taxi dispute that we are all aware of. There is a realisation that we need to fight an economic

war where everybody will be empowered," said Cele.

He added that he was delighted with the commitment both associations demonstrated in finding a solution, and said that it was this commitment which had, in fact, enabled an agreement to be reached. Cele said he hoped that the positive outcome of this dispute would be replicated in other route disputes affecting the province. The MEC said he was concerned about the escalating tensions on the north coast.

Pinetown Taxi Association chairman Bheki Thusi told Igalelo that both associations entered the renewed negotiations committed to finding a solution.

He thanked Cele and Mbanjwa for the role they played in putting the matter to rest. In terms of the agreement, both associations will share the route, but for the moment, each will not load for the return trips. Mbanjwa said that negotiations are still continuing over the issue of return trips and that he is confident that "an amicable solution" will be arrived at.

"In this day and age of rising petrol costs, it makes sense that a vehicle loads for both the destination and return trips, but we are still working on resolving that issue," he concluded.

Commuters have their say

THE 5000 COMMUTERS AFFECTED BY THE TAXI FEUD HEAVED A COLLECTIVE SIGH OF RELIEF WHEN MEC BHEKI CELE ANNOUNCED THE LIFTING OF THE BAN. IGALELO SPOKE TO SOME COMMUTERS ABOUT THE RECENT EVENTS

Jabulani Mhlongo

"Our local taxis are not involved in any dispute. It is only the Mpumalanga to Pinetown route that is problematic. It was therefore unfair that all the routes had to be closed...but the community is happy that the ban has been lifted. We just hope that the matter has been finally laid to rest."

Sipho Xaba

"There are some routes that buses failed to go to and people therefore had to walk long distances in order to get transport. This also affected some school children. Now that they have resolved their

issues, we hope that the taxi associations will abide to it."

Simon Mthethwa

"We are worried that if this problem is not resolved 100%, the taxis will be taken out of this route completely and we will end up losing our jobs because we will be late for work as the buses are too expensive."

Khaya Bhengu

"We appreciate government's assistance and government needed to take a firm stance to resolve this matter so that it does not recur."



A happy ending as the two taxi association chairpersons, Mandla Nene and Bheki Thusi, shake hands in agreement to share the route they have been fighting over for years. MEC Bheki Cele, Conflict Resolution Manager Themba Gumbi and CEO Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa look on.

Diversification opens new doors for taxi operators

KZN Transport CEO Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa has always urged taxi owners to diversify their interests to include trucking and shipping.

His vision has now turned to reality with mainstream manufacturers agreeing to a request from the department to make room for emerging haulage contractors.

Public and Freight Transport general manager George Mahlalela has every reason to be proud for putting the department's vision into practise with the announcement that two taxi operators have been awarded lucrative contracts with a major Pietermaritzburg company.

Mahlalela's freight directorate approached various companies on behalf of small transport operators seeking freight opportunities.

Tiger Milling became the first company to give taxi operators, Themba and Thoko

Gamede, a five-year contract to transport goods like flour and maize to warehouses throughout KwaZulu-Natal. Mahlalela said: "The empowerment of small freight operators will create job opportunities and open business platforms that have previously been closed and will serve as a testimony that it is possible to venture into other businesses."

Speaking to *Igalelo*, Gamede thanked the department for paving the way for their entry into the trucking industry.

"There are challenges ahead of us since this is a new business, but with dedication and hard work, we will make it."

"I can only thank the Department of Transport for such an opportunity and hope that the endless support we have received from them will not stop," he said.

Apart from the direct support being offered by the Department of Transport,



Siphon Mncube, Thoko and Themba Gamede, a representative from Tiger Milling and George Mahlalela, General Manager - Public and Freight Transport

the provincial government is spearheading a small transport operator empowerment programme that combines the resources of the departments of Transport, Economic Development and Agriculture.

The joint inter-departmental venture involves identifying, formalising and empowering small operators by providing business and entrepreneurial skills. The project has already

trained over 130 small freight operators.

Tiger Milling has given taxi operators a five-year contract to transport flour and maize to warehouses

Transportation as the icon of development

The newly built multi-million rand M4 Zimbali Coastal Road was officially opened by National Minister of Transport, Jeff Radebe, KZN MEC Bheki Cele and Transport Department CEO, Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa.

The road aims to harness public and private sector cooperation for mutual benefit. The construction of the new road has somewhat alleviated the financial burden placed on provincial government to maintain our roads.

The R42 million road project will boost the region's economy, improve tourism and create job opportunities.

Radebe said: "The project

puts KwaZulu-Natal on the world map enabling it to become a respected tourism gateway as we approach the 2010 Soccer World Cup".

Cele re-inforced Radebe's comments adding: "As a Department, we are committed to building roads that bring prosperity and wealth to the people of KwaZulu-Natal."

Moreland Development's Neel Brink said that the road partnership between a private listed company and provincial and national government is the first of its kind.

The M4 road lies between the Zimbali Resort and an international signature golf course. Zimbali is a five star



National Minister of Transport Jeff Radebe cuts the ribbon to officially open the R42 million Ballito M4 highway road north of Durban. Assisting Minister Radebe are Transport, Community Safety and Liaison MEC Bheki Cele and chairperson of Moreland Properties Steven Saunders. At the back are KZN Department of Transport CEO Dr.Kwazi Mbanjwa, Morelands President and Chief Operating Officer James Wilson and Morelands Resorts Director Neels Brink.



Jubilant celebration after the cutting of the ribbon

lodge rated amongst the top 31 resorts in the world.

The estate on which the road runs is owned by Moreland Development and International Financial Advisors (IFA). IFA, which is based in Kuwait purchased fifty percent of Zimbali for

R500 million. The company has hotel assets worth R3.5 billion in Europe and the Middle East.

Dr Mbanjwa said that the Department of Transport was proud to be part of such an economic growth initiative, and said he hopes similar ini-

tiatives will be implemented in the future

"It is not the wealth of a country that builds roads, it is roads that build the wealth of a country," concluded Dr Mbanjwa.



MEC Bheki Cele lighting the candle at the prayer for crime and accidents held at Umlazi recently

Call for Divine intervention to reduce road accidents during Easter

munity are requested to hand in illegal firearms and cartridges to their nearest police station.

“Criminals do not belong to the community. Let us commit ourselves to fighting crime and we urge members of the public to report criminal activities,” the Premier and MEC concluded.

Meanwhile Andile Majola, an ex-convict is living proof of change. He was involved

in quite a number of criminal activities but said that crime does not pay. Through his commitment and hard work, he attained a B. Comm. Degree, an Honours Degree and has released a gospel CD. “Freedom is not about carrying guns and taking drugs, but freedom is about making the right decisions and taking every opportunity that comes your way,” said Majola.

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Bheki Cele, was among a number of dignitaries who attended a prayer day to invoke divine intervention regarding the high levels of road accidents and criminal activities in our province. The King Zwelithini Stadium in Umlazi was packed to the rafters, highlighting the seriousness of the occasion.

In his address the MEC appealed to the community to play a pro-active role in preventing crime and in reducing the number of accidents on our roads.

He stated that safety is not only the concern of the department, but that churches also

have a role to play by preaching the gospel of safety to their congregations.

In the majority of accidents, serious injuries and even deaths have been caused by unlicensed and drunk drivers who display a total disregard for other road users. He also urged transport operators to treat the public with respect and dignity.

“The killings and the fighting over routes have to stop. The routes do not belong to the owners but to the people who use public transport. Failure to comply will result in taxi operations being closed down until agreement is reached by all parties involved,” said the MEC.

He issued a stern warning

to the public that roadblocks will be in operation all over KwaZulu -Natal during the Easter Holidays in order to stem the tide of escalating road accidents. Motorists stopped at roadblocks will be subjected to hi-tech testing devices that have assisted in such operations. This includes the Mophor touch machine which can detect offences committed by any person and the Remcom machine which is able to detect unpaid traffic fines.

Meanwhile, Premier Sibusiso Ndebele and MEC Bheki Cele are on their mission. They have gone all out to communicate the amnesty on illegal firearms and ammunition. Members of the com-



KZN Premier Sibusiso Ndebele's wife Zama Ndebele lighting the candle. Next to her is MEC Bheki Cele

Seven lives lost- strict measures to be imposed on KZN roads

Transport CEO Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa led a delegation of senior officials from the Department of Transport accompanied by Transport Portfolio Committee members to visit survivors of the recent horror truck-taxi accident near Estcourt.

Seven people, including a seven-month old baby and a one-year-old toddler, were killed.

While investigations continue, it appears that the crash was caused by a speeding truck which overtook on a solid barrier line and then slammed into the on-coming mini-bus taxi.

The driver of the truck, a 55-year old male was arrested. The taxi driver was killed instantly.

One of the paramedics attending the scene described the accident as one of the most horrific he has ever seen in his "entire career".

“It was gruesome. There were body parts scattered all over the road,” the paramedic said.

Speaking from the scene before visiting survivors in hospital, Mbanjwa promised more roadblocks this Easter.

“We offer our condolences to the victims and their families and wish survivors a speedy recovery. During

Easter we will increase roadblocks. We commit ourselves and our resources to ensuring the safety of all road users.

Drivers must play their part by complying with all road rules,” said Mbanjwa.



Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa being briefed on the accident which claimed seven lives, including two babies. The horror crash took place on the R74 in Loskop just outside Estcourt.



Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa and Road Safety Manager Thoko Mabaso visit the injured with flowers, while Doctor Bahavish Sewram of Estcourt hospital examines Khulekani Shabalala (10)



**A DAY OF
PRAYER FOR
NO CRIME
NO
ACCIDENTS**

Forthcoming prayer
meetings:
Suiki Maikari Group,
Durban, Umgeni Rd
22nd March
10h00

Easter Service
King Zwelithini
Stadium,
25th March
09h00



Bridge brings joy and relief to residents

The many years of suffering endured by the community of Mahlabathini near Ulundi is coming to an end with the building of a pedestrian bridge over the White Umfolozi River.

The White Umfolozi River is one of the largest rivers in the province. The river floods regularly during the summer months. There were no bridge crossings in the vicinity and this put the lives of the community, particularly children going to school, in danger whilst crossing the river. Recently a young boy, Vukani Zulu, drowned while attempting to cross the river to get to school.

MEC Bheki Cele lamented the loss of life and promised that his department would improve the lives of people in this area.

"In order for these learners to cross the river, they have to fully expose themselves which is deeply humiliating and abnormal. Their inability to cross during flooding is also disruptive to their schooling, which is why I promise that by the next rainy season, this bridge will be open," said Cele.

He was speaking at the sod-turning ceremony for

the White Umfolozi River Pedestrian Bridge held recently at Nomzimane High School approximately 1,5 kilometres north of the river.

About 30 learners have to cross the river daily to get to school.

The bridge, said Cele, is also going to help eradicate poverty by creating local construction jobs. He urged the community to forget about political affiliations and differences, and instead work together to uplift their lives.

"This bridge has been built with government money by an MEC of the KwaZulu-Natal government, and not by a political leader. Thus this bridge is for all members of this community irrespective of their political affiliation," said Cele.

"Our government aims to improve the lives of everyone irrespective of their political affiliation and no matter where they live," he added.

Both national and provincial government have embarked on the construction of the pedestrian bridge which will see an investment of more than R2 million into the area.



ABOVE: Residents attempt to cross the White Umfolozi River. Pupils regularly expose themselves to risk when attempting to cross the river during the rainy season, when the river often floods.



RIGHT: MEC Cele at the sod-turning ceremony for the new pedestrian bridge.

Finding ways to reduce carnage at accident hot spots



Chris Hlabisa leads the discussions on finding solutions to the high accident rate at two interchanges in Mtubatuba. The area has a high density of truck traffic.

In its bid to create a safe provincial road network, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport recently hosted a joint strategy workshop to reduce the high accident rate at an interchange in Mtubatuba on the north coast.

Between 2002 and 2004, 18 collisions have occurred at the Nkodibe interchange resulting in 9 deaths and 27 injuries. At the Bhofoza interchange, during the same period, there were 37 collisions, 18 people killed and 53 injured.

Recently, a delegation from the Department of Transport led by General Manager Implementation, Chris Hlabisa, the South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL) and the municipalities of Mtubatuba and Hlabisa, met to discuss strategies to bring an end to the carnage at two interchanges namely, Mtubatuba North (Nkodibe) and Mtubatuba South (Bhofoza).

"This meeting is the first of many that the department will hold with other government stakeholders to bring development to the people," said Hlabisa.

In the past, both these intersec-

tions have been found to be unsafe due to high volumes of traffic which lead to accidents involving vehicles and pedestrians. The presence of cane trucks adds to the rate of accidents. The solution would be to build off ramps to create free flowing interchanges. Weighbridges are also a possibility.

Construction is expected to start on the Nkodibe Interchange in October and on the Bhofoza Interchange a year later.

At the meeting a task team was created to discuss responsibilities, assignments and duties of each of the stakeholders. SANRAL will be responsible for the design and supervision of the construction.

"This meeting is a step in the right direction and I am certain that it will not end in discussions of construction only, but will continue on law enforcement and other road safety measures," Hlabisa concluded.

"This meeting is like a step forward for all parties to partner"

Transport bicycle project creates job opportunities and cuts down travel expenses



As part of the programme the Department will not tolerate this type of travel

The KZN Department of Transport has innovated yet another community job-creation programme in the form of a bicycle supply project designed to help rural people reduce travel expenses.

This year alone, six new sites to house the bicycle projects have been identified in municipalities like Nongoma, Ulundi, Mtubatuba, Mhlab'uyalingana, Dannhauser and Ntambanana.

Six project managers have been appointed and trained to co-ordinate the sale of bicycles to rural community members.

The Department has followed the tender process since August last year which has resulted in the appointment of a service provider to supply the bicycles to the community-based retailers.

Provincial Transport Department head, Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa said: "The Department is to observe an arms-length attitude in the way this type of business is run. To that effect, we have facili-

tated a meeting between the appointed bicycle supplier and the community-based managers tasked to market the product to the various communities."

"The meeting is precisely to bring them together so that they can get to know one another and work together without having to rely on the Department," he added.

Mbanjwa pointed out: "We are working closely with various local governments in the province and we are proud to be associated with them in yet another programme that is aimed at reaching out to rural communities with this cheaper transport

mode - the bicycle. You see bicycles everywhere in Western and Eastern countries: why not Africa?"

The ownership of the business should be in the community. The business is run by a member of the community who sells low cost bicycles to the community, services them and sells spares and accessories. Proceeds of the sales are used to pay the shop manager and to buy either new or second hand bicycles.

The principles on which this Rural Transport Initiative is built is twofold. Firstly, "handouts" cannot be said to constitute development and are not sustainable.

Secondly, it aims to create opportunities for entrepreneurs in the local communities where the initiative is established. For this reason, the bicycles are not given away to communities but are instead sold at a price that would make the bicycle micro-business a sustainable entity.

Shova Kalula - towards cheaper mobility

In many areas throughout Africa and the world, bicycles provide vital low-cost mobility. However, for a number of reasons bicycles are seldom used in South Africa.

The main reason is that many people in South Africa cannot afford to spend a significant amount of money on personal transport.

They depend on the cheapest form of transport: walking. For longer trips, public transport is used which includes walking to and from the drop-off point.

The next cheapest form of personal travel, after walking, is the bicycle. This is why the Department has piloted a rural bicycle initiative known as Shova Kalula (meaning cycle with ease).

The project emanates from the 1998/99 KwaZulu-Natal Rural Mobility Study which found that over fifty percent of trips to work in rural areas are made on foot and over eighty percent of learners in rural areas walk to school.

In order to address this severe mobility crisis within the constraints of limited budgets, the study recommended that bicycles could be used for

personal transport.

This recommendation was tested in two pilot projects in the Izingolweni and Muden areas during 2000 to 2001. It was found that if communities had access to affordable bicycles, spares and servicing, there would be a noticeable increase in the use of cycles as a transport mode even if prices of bicycles and spares were not subsidised.

This initiative is based on the findings of the pilot projects and intends to address mobility needs in rural communities. It aims at sustaining the provision of affordable mobility to rural communities through bicycles.

The KZN Transport Department will establish the micro-business in partnership with the municipality. The municipality is responsible for sourcing suitable outlets from which to sell the bicycles. This can either be a suitably situated existing structure that can be made available for the use of the bicycle shop, or a recycled shipping container established in a suitably positioned, secure site.

The Department purchases an initial supply of bicycles which act as

start-up capital for the shop. The Department funds the training of local entrepreneurs to run the micro-business. The Department also funds the training of community ownership structures established in conjunction with the municipality in order to ensure community buy in to the initiative.

This approach enables the business to start without any debt, making it viable to run with minimal mark-up for profit. Community ownership also ensures that the business operates on a sustainable "not-for-profit" basis.

The objectives of the KwaZulu-Natal Rural Transport Initiative are to improve rural mobility and hence the economic and development potential of rural communities through the facilitation of mobility that is:

- Affordable and appropriate;
- Economically sustainable; and
- Environmentally friendly and healthy.

In reaching these objectives, this initiative has the associated benefits of skills transfer and job creation.

KZN DOT acknowledged as the leader in rural development

Great strides made in uplifting rural communities

In acknowledging that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport is indeed amongst the best in the world, a political analyst from a renowned South African academic institution has said that it is not common for developing countries to spend so much money on rural communities.

On the contrary, it is not surprising to hear rural people in other parts of the world complaining of a complete lack of access to resources.

University of the Witwatersrand politics department head, Tom Lodge, told the Star newspaper recently: "There are very few governments in the Third World that consciously bias their expenditure towards rural development."

Between the years 2002 and 2004 the Department of Transport in this province spent at least R2 billion on new roads and upgrades, writes Ed Stoddard.

This is obviously thanks to the rich legacy of KwaZulu Natal Premier Sibusiso Ndebele who was a Transport MEC of note in the country. Ndebele has passed on the torch to an equally aggressive developmental crusader, Bheki Cele (MEC for Transport, Community Safety & Liaison).

Stoddard states in his article: "Tied to this have been development projects aimed at expanding eco-tourism in an area famed for its beauty, beaches and wildlife, and a drive to provide electricity and clean water to poor rural villages."

Needless to say, KwaZulu-Natal has been one of the leading provinces in the service delivery of the

government's priorities i.e. providing rural people with water, lights and roads.

The Star writer found that poor rural people have been touched in a serious and meaningful way by the KZN Department of Transport.

He spoke to Bongki Nkosi whom he encountered standing proudly next to her family house, gushing over an extension made possible by the provision of roads in the province. Nkosi said: "I used to have a one-room house, but now it has six rooms," she said.

Stoddard adds: "Like many people in KwaZulu Natal, Nkosi has benefited from a massive government road building campaign that has transformed transportation, created jobs and tourism opportunities, and taken a swipe at poverty."

Nkosi, who works at the Sibaya Lake Lodge, says her income has increased because road improvements have made it possible for more tourists to visit Sibaya Lake Lodge. As a result she and her husband have been able to extend their home.

Commented a rural resident, Jeff Zikhali, who works at the same lodge: "It is better now with the road. You used to take a bus or a taxi and it would drop you very far from your home."

Stoddard observes: "To anyone who has travelled to KwaZulu Natal's remote coastal regions over the past few years, the results are nothing short of startling. Many people here experience the gravel road for the first time and the difference that it makes in their lives."



A road being constructed in a rural area.

Empowering the disabled



We are able, not unable, say employees

In line with equity plans the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport intends employing more physically challenged staff, and to further empower them by providing additional training and support.

The initiative, says Corporate Services Senior General Manager Vicky Cunliffe, is not only about complying with policies and laws that govern this country, but rather about empowering disabled people to be part of normal society without being discriminated against.

The Department aims to speed up transformation by providing the necessary training and support for disabled staff.

CEO Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa says: "Having a disability does not mean that people are not capable. They merely need additional assistance in dealing with certain challenges that they encounter. We as a department, have a role to play in making the lives of staff easier, and to ensure that all staff feel that they are part of our extended family," said Mbanjwa.

He commended the excellent contribution disabled staff presently make, adding that the concept of humanity is based on embracing differences among people.

Igalelo spoke to a few disabled staff members.

Barbara MamNcube Zondi

MamNcube worked for Sappi Forests as a wage clerk for 13 years. Her studies towards a Bachelor of Social Science Degree were disrupted by the outbreak of violence in 1976. She later joined the Department of Health as an admin. officer and was later promoted to senior officer. In 1989 she enrolled for a Bachelor of Administration Degree. She joined the Department of Transport in 2002 as Deputy Director. She is a mother of five - two boys and three girls, and a grandmother of two.

"God has played a major role in my life. I learned to accept my disability and instead of seeing it as a hindrance, I have relied on my faith to draw inspiration to overcome life's challenges."

"In life, one always has to turn obstacles into challenges. If my legs fail me one day I will have to find a way to continue working," says MamNcube. She says her goal is to learn to drive and hopes that the department will assist her to realise this goal.

Samkelisiwe Mhlongo

Mhlongo joined the Department in 2001 as an

administration clerk and deals daily with queries and complaints from the public. She believes that additional training, particularly in communication, will further empower her to improve her service delivery. "Additional training will assist me to improve my work and boost my confidence," she stated. She also hopes to drive a car one day. "The support and encouragement I receive from colleagues and management is amazing. I am proud to work for the Department of Transport."

Mandla Madlala

Madlala joined the Department in 2000 as a switchboard operator. He has two children.

He feels that people have the perception that disabled people have no capabilities and are therefore undermined. "The initiative of the Department is wonderful. We now feel part of the family. At a workshop that was held last year, documents for the training were transcribed into Braille. It gave us the opportunity to listen and understand the contents of the workshop. "I would like to thank colleagues for their continued support and also appeal to them to do the same for other people outside the Department. "Disability is just a minor challenge, but with love and support all things are achievable," said Madlala.

He would like to participate in departmental activities such as sport.

Thembinkosi Mpulo

Mpulo, who joined the Department in 2003 as a switchboard operator, believes that many people do not fully understand his impairment.

"People are afraid to interact with disabled people. We do not want to be treated differently, but want to be part of the team," said Mpulo.

He hopes to further his studies and get involved in public relations.

"I would really enjoy participating in as many departmental activities as possible," added Mpulo who plans to get married soon.



ABOVE: Head of Department Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa presenting gifts to Mandla Madlala and Barbara Zondi



Some members of staff who are disabled: Barbara Zondi seated, Thembinkosi Mpulo, Samkelisiwe Mhlongo and Mandla Madlala



CEO Dr Kwazi Mbanjwa with some disabled members of staff

How to contact us

Letters to the Editor as well as general comments can be forwarded to:
Igalelo Editor, KZN Transport Department, Private Bag X9043, Pietermaritzburg, 3201.
Tel: 033-355 8624
Fax: 033-3558632
E-mail:

Piwe.Mkhize@Kzntransport.gov.za
Igalelo is produced by the KZN Department of Transport's Communication Support Directorate.
www.kzntransport.gov.za

"We do not want to be treated differently, we want to be part of the team"