



**SPEECH (NOTES) BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,
COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON, MR. BHEKI CELE AT THE
OFFICIAL OPENING OF SQANDULWENI PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
ON SUNDAY, 1ST JULY 2007.**

All Protocol Observed.

- Our gathering here today once again bears testimony to our government's commitment to ensure that we create a balanced road network.
- In South Africa and in KwaZulu-Natal in particular, a large portion of the population who reside in rural areas can only access community facilities like clinics, schools, pension pay-out points, home affairs offices etc. by bus, taxi or on foot.
- It is for that reason that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport commenced constructing pedestrian bridges at river crossings more than five years ago. Despite our attempts to reverse the backlog, there has been an increase in the demand for such structures from numerous communities.

- Today we are opening the bridge that will save lives of our school learners and the community members of Sqandulweni area who always put their lives in danger when they cross Umkhomazi River.
- The construction of Sqandulweni Bridge started in November 2005 and was completed in April 2007 at the tune of R3,53 million. As it is our policy, the contractor made extensive use of local labour as his entire workforce, with the exception of a foreman, two semi-skilled laborers and two specialist sub-contractors were drawn from the local community.
- I am told that this bridge is the first pre-stressed concrete ribbon bridge built in the country and its clear span of 150 meters equals the world record for this type of footbridge.
- I am pleased to say that our Department is in constant liaison and consultation with all communities through our Rural Road Transport Forums (RRTF's), Community Road Safety Councils (CRSC's), the local municipality and other civil society structures.
- This process of on-going consultation facilitates the identification of transport needs, which is then prioritized for the benefit of all the people of our province.

- The following roads and causeways have been built in the Ixopo area during the last financial year:
 - Zweliyabuya Road to the value of R667 000;
 - Ncakubane Road to the value of R580 000;

 - Siphephelengweni Road to the value of R467 290;

 - AmaNyuswa Road to the value of R875 710. This is due to be completed this month of July; and

 - Ncakubane Causeway to the value of R422 894.

TOTAL =R3 012 894

- The projects for the 2007/08 financial year are as follows:
 - Ncakubane Road to the value of R580 000. This is another phase;
 - Nhlewukeni Road to the value of R805, 530;
 - Mahlubini Road to the value of R536, 250;
 - Nomabhunga Causeway to the value of R402, 500;
 - Replacement of damaged Causeway on D483 to the value of R500, 000;
 - Replacement of damaged Causeway on D2156 to the value of R500, 000;
 - Umzimkhulu Pedestrian Bridge to the value of R4, 700, 000;
 - Reseal and rehabilitation of P68-1 to the value of R3, 907, 709.

TOTAL =R11 931 989

- In addition to the above, in this financial year this area will also benefit in respect of the following :
 - Safety Maintenance to the value of R1 102 064;
 - Routine Maintenance to the value of R2 775 761;
 - Zibambele contracts to the value of R6 392 912; and
 - Re-gravelling to the value of R4 751 091.

TOTAL = R15 021 828

- Therefore, in addition to the construction of the Squandulweni Pedestrian Bridge and other above-mentioned projects during the last financial year, the lives of the residents of this area will be improved through other road infrastructural projects to the value of nearly R27 million.
- So today's bridge opening does not only seek to pave the way for linking communities to social, cultural and economic amenities, but this project also ensures our commitment to "create a better life for all", as well as "defend the weak and protect the vulnerable".
- Finally, there can be no doubt, indeed, that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport is advancing well towards achieving its objective of creating an equitable and sustainable transport system in KZN.

I thank you