



**SPEECH NOTES BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,  
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIASON MR BHEKI CELE AT THE SOD  
TURNING OF P127 AT IMPENDLE ON SATURDAY, 01 SEPTEMBER 2007.**

**Protocol observed**

- Today is a great day for the people of Impendle and the whole of Umgungundlovu District. You will recall that the results of our Community Access Roads Needs Study highlighted that more than 60% of our gravel roads were in a poor condition.
- The study also established that rural road users are the most severely affected with unacceptably high vehicle operating costs. This is even worse for people in rural areas like here where there are no industrial zones that can address such challenges.
- However, in the past years my Department has been gradually unlocking these economic shackles by means of innovative programmes that sought to address rural poverty. Our efforts in trying to push back the frontiers of poverty are known everywhere.

- The official openings and sod turnings that are held all over the province highlight the very important task we set ourselves to change the lives of the people of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Hence today we have this sod-turning ceremony to mark the beginning of road works that will see Main Road 127 upgraded. We know that if the road network fails, our provincial economy will collapse. Our challenge is to remedy road network inequalities that arose during the apartheid era, and even before. We need to grow our rural economies and serve our rural populations.
- This road serves a relatively large community in the Impendle area. It is therefore an important road in providing access to all the communities that live along this road. Upgrading this road will improve access to the existing four clinics and twenty-four schools that are within the communities along P127.
- This road can also be defined as a bus route as it provides a link with Underberg and Himville. This route is used by public transport operators. Upgrading this road will attract traffic to the Eastern Cape, Kokstad, Bulwer and the Midlands.

- Constructing this road will involve a substantial financial injection into the area with job opportunities being created over a minimum period of ten years. The estimated cost of construction for this 55km road, based on current construction costs, is approximately R350 million.
- May I emphasize that my Department is committed to a structured, ongoing consultation process that allows stakeholders to make informed decisions on how best to prioritize their road access needs. That is why the Department established Rural Road Transport Forums (RRTFs).
- RRTFs spearhead and advocate development by promoting public participation and accelerate transformation in the Departmental service-delivery process. RRTF members have a mandate to report back to their communities.
- Fortunately, I have had an opportunity to meet the executives of these forums and learnt that indeed, there are some challenges they face in their operations. But while we iron out these issues we are expected to continue with the work at hand to develop our communities;
- I am appealing to communities to use our various structures that were established to liaise between the Department and them. We do not expect members of the community to accuse us for not delivering when they have not used proper structures. We have structures like Community Road Safety Councils (CRSC) and Passenger Associations, among others that you can also use.

- Everyday, we in the Department look for ways to meet new challenges: we have made it easier for women and children to reach schools and clinics. This alone is the true meaning of what DEMOCRACY is all about – ACCESS, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE. There can be no better way we can defend the weak.

**I thank you**