



SPEECH NOTES BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIASON MR BHEKI CELE DURING THE RRTF INDABA HELD IN PIETERMARITZBURG ON SATURDAY, 25 AUGUST 2007.

Protocol observed

- The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport is committed to a structured, ongoing consultation process that allows stakeholders to make informed decisions on how best to prioritise their road access needs and, at the same time, facilitate the growth and development of the road construction industry to better reflect our demographic profile.
- In realizing that the vast majority of the communities were excluded in the decision-making processes which affect their growth, the department established Rural Road Transport Forums (RRTFs) to spearhead and advocate development by promoting public participation and accelerate transformation in the Departmental service delivery process.
- In the context of a province previously torn apart by political war, as RRTFs you have played and continue to play an important role in reconciliation and rural development.
- I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the role you have played in changing the road infrastructure in KwaZulu-Natal. The challenge that lies ahead may be daunting, but it is not unachievable.
- We have openly embraced the challenges to accelerate the transformation of KwaZulu-Natal society; contributed to the creation of wealth of our province and our country, but particularly within poor communities; redistributed opportunities within the transport sector; and built the capacities of the impoverished communities.

- Our objectives may not be utopian, but we want an improved standard of living in rural areas in relation to the standard of living in urban areas, a more competitive transportation market in which the benefits from savings in transport costs are passed.
- The official openings and sod turnings that we do all over the province are indeed an example of the very important task we set ourselves to change the lives and develop the resources of the people of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Among us here we have the leadership including Amakhosi, Mayors and Councillors. Their presence signifies the importance we attach to the development of rural communities that have been neglected by the previous governments.
- As RRTFs you are a vehicle for facilitating an ongoing dialogue between the communities and the Department in building democracy and participatory development by enhancing a sustainable dialogue with communities.
- You are constituted in a manner which is fully representative of all rural stakeholders. Sectors represented on the RRTF include Amakhosi, the business community, district and local municipalities, public transport, farmers and community based organisations inclusive of women and youth.
- I want to emphasize here that you have a mandate to report to your communities. You are not here for personal needs. We expect you to volunteer your time as per agreement. Your participation should not centre around the allowance the Department gives you when you attend meetings. It becomes a conflict of interest when you want to get rich from working voluntarily.
- As you are volunteers, we don't look at your political parties but from your sectors. We want to hear what positive impact you are making to these sectors.
- I am glad that you also receive training in a programme that has been specifically designed to build your capacity to engage the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport in an informed and orderly way and, at the same time, act as resource persons to your communities.

- Training enables you to be developmental activists in your communities by placing you in a position where you can identify and prioritise community needs and understand how different spheres of government operate.
- The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport's road infrastructure investments are planned, prioritised and recorded on a project by project basis in consultation with the RRTFs. This ensures that our road investment strategy is anchored in the communities that you serve and that the management of projects and budgets can be monitored by the beneficiary communities.
- Infrastructure is the priority service even in the ASGISA and PGDS. Therefore your role is very important in providing an equitable network. Priorities must not be governed by selfishness and biasness.
- The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport is increasingly committed to a planning process that builds the relationship between integrated transport planning and integrated development planning and to promoting co-operative good governance
- This commitment has been formalised on all African Renaissance Road Upgrading Projects – the upgrading of major rural transport corridors from gravel to blacktop – through the establishment of Project Liaison Committees which are fully representative of all major stakeholders including Local Government and Traditional Leaders.
- In conclusion, the role of the RRTFs has been very crucial because we have built more other structures from lessons learnt from RRTFs. We can mention CRSCs and Passenger Associations, among others. Your role is still bigger than you may think and we still expect you to be instrumental.

I thank you