



SPEECH NOTES FOR THE KZN HOD FOR TRANSPORT MR CHRIS HLABISA DURING THE BRANDHOUSE PRIZE GIVING CEREMONY ON THURSDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2008

All protocol observed.

- The KZN Department has produced a documentary that shows our people, our mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers and relatives and friends dead on the road. At least you can see it on DVD, we see it live; not once, but many times.
- Research has shown that a very high percentage of accidents are preceded by a road traffic violation, which makes the improvement of road-user perceptions, attitudes and behaviour a matter of urgency.
- This country has been experiencing about 15 000 fatalities on our roads annually. The estimated cost of the impact of deaths and injuries sustained as a result of road accidents is now R43 billion.
- One unfortunate thing about these accidents is that they kill people who are economically active. People who drive their cars or travel in public transport are mostly working and have dependants. Another thing is that the impact of fatalities is seen on people left behind.

- Ladies and gentlemen, Public transport can only improve if we work together as a collective. While it is true that government has a responsibility to regulate the industry and ensure compliance with safety standards, the communities similarly have an obligation to ensure that operators provide the level of service expected by the commuters.
- As government, we are under no illusion about the magnitude of the task at hand and the obligation we have in ensuring that the public transport system is responsive to national policy imperatives and contributes meaningfully to economic development and growth.
- We know that major changes have taken place in regulating and stabilising what was once an industry that was characterised by utter chaos.
- We have scored many successes that have instilled hope for the social and economic upliftment of this province. These successes have derived from the interventions we have made to address the crises that have arisen from time to time as a result of the historical lack of an infrastructure to accommodate an area of public transport that has daily grown by leaps and bounds.
- In KwaZulu-Natal and in South Africa generally, we are still faced with a situation where previous town planning did not accommodate our public transport. This is a task that municipalities must respond to squarely in designing their public transport plans, infrastructure development, and land use policies.
- I must make so bold as to predict that the public transport industry in KwaZulu-Natal is going to stand out as a major success story in the way of the social and economic empowerment of the people of this province.

- The reason for my optimism lies in the very fact that the strengths and opportunities that the industry exhibits far outweigh the threats and weaknesses it has experienced during the fledgling days of its transformation process.
- The taxi industry, as a sector of the economy, has a unique profile. No other sector of the economy is predominantly and overwhelmingly black owned, black managed and black operated. It is also a well-known fact that this industry services many black commuters.
- As a mode of public transportation, the minibus taxi industry carries the bulk of the public transport burden. The national average market share of the industry exceeds 60%. Within the KZN Province we are talking about a higher percentage due to the weaknesses in the rail system.
- The previous government did nothing to ensure stability and self-sustainability for the minibus taxi industry. The sustainability of this industry and the safety of the passengers it carried were of no consequence to a government that was preoccupied with the protection of minority interests.
- Our democratic government is committed to a structured, ongoing consultation process that allows stakeholders to make informed decisions on how best to prioritise their needs, either on public transport or road safety.
- It is on that score that the KZN Department of Transport has formed its provincial commuter structure, the KwaZulu-Natal Public Transport Passenger Association.

- In the context of a province having experienced taxi violence, the Passenger Associations play an important role in bringing about peace and reconciliation. They promote passenger safety and improve relations between the operators and the entire public.
- Indeed, the little strides we make as stakeholders and communities as a contribution to the broader agenda of improving public transport system must be acknowledged and appreciated. The challenge that lies ahead may be daunting, but it is not unachievable.

I thank you.