

**SPEECH NOTES FOR KZN MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY
SAFETY AND LIAISON MR WILLIES MCHUNU DURING THE
BRANDHOUSE PRIZE GIVING CEREMONY ON FRIDAY 15 OCTOBER
2010**

All protocol observed.

It is always encouraging when one is invited to occasions such as this one that bears testimony to the passion experienced by all of us for growth, development and transformation in the Taxi Industry. I wish to pay a special thanks to all stakeholders and organisers of the Brandhouse Number Taxi Campaign for the marvellous work they are doing.

I am of the view that such campaigns will go a long way in addressing some of the pertinent challenges that confront this industry and public transportation in general. We, as Government, have always emphasised the importance of partnership, be it in social or economic development.

Therefore, it is a sign of great maturity that this partnership between the provincial Department of Transport, RTMC, Toyota SA, SANTACO and National Taxi Alliance has produced the role models we see today in the taxi industry. It is always our endeavour to honour role models who will show the values of responsible driving and great customer care driven from both the individual driver as well as the taxi owners.

Ladies and gentlemen, Public transport can only improve if we work together collectively. 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 commuters.

We know that major changes have taken place in regulating and stabilising an industry that was once 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 been 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 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 situations 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 a claim 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.

Again ladies and gentlemen, may I request that you support our Government, particularly the Transport Department, in its undertakings of saving lives and reducing accidents on our roads. We are compelled to do something for our people who, everyday, are praying to settle down to a life of freedom, security and comfort.

Our people want to be able to assert their pride in the reconstruction of our province and the country. They want to travel in peace when they go to and from their places of work, home, prayer, recreation and all other things in which public transport has become the lifeline of secure and comfortable commuting. They do not want to be preoccupied with thoughts of a road accident that brings death and destruction or the bullying and rude attitudes of drivers and their assistants.

In conclusion, to our drivers who are awarded prizes today, the message is clear. We are awarding you because we hold the view that you need to be ambassadors of proper and good behaviour on our roads. You go out to help save as many lives as you can on our roads.

Finally, as per the objectives of this campaign, we hope that it will help educate taxi drivers and other road users on road safety and highlights, in particular, driver fatigue, disregard for traffic rules, drinking and driving, high speed driving and un-roadworthiness of vehicles.

Indeed, the little strides we make as stakeholders and communities are each a contribution to the broader agenda of improving public transport system and must be acknowledged and appreciated. The challenges that lie ahead may be daunting, but they are not impossible to overcome.

I thank you.