

**SPEECH NOTES FOR KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON, HON. WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE OPENING OF JOHN ROSS INTERSECTION IN RICHARDS BAY ON 11 JULY 2011**

Programme Director;  
Honourable Mayor;  
Councillors;  
Management of the BHP Billiton;  
Honourable guests;  
Members of the media;  
Protocol Observed;

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you for allowing me to join you here today to celebrate the achievements of the BHP Billiton Aluminium SA.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport as a representative of the provincial legislature is responsible for the management and operations of the transportation system in KwaZulu-Natal. This includes the construction, upgrading, maintenance and control of the provincial road network and vehicles as well as the implementation of road safety campaigns and awareness programmes.

The backlog in the provision of the road infrastructure which the democratic government of the ANC has sought to reverse over the last sixteen years, particularly in the rural areas, is a direct result of the imbalances of the past. Dealing with discrepancies that have been created by centuries of colonial and apartheid neglect, is precisely our legislative mandate.

It is therefore comforting to know that government is not alone in tackling this extraordinary task at hand. Ladies and gentlemen, today we are here to celebrate the public-private partnership that has seen the upgrading of John Ross Highway and West Central Arterial Intersection at a cost of R75 million.

This must be applauded since it is tangible evidence of how major industry and commerce have an integral role to play in contributing to the ideals of the reconstruction and development of our country.

As I am given to understand, the John Ross/ West Central Arterial intersection has always been extremely congested and the new over-pass and link roads will certainly improve the traffic flow and the safety of road users, particularly as the harbour-bound traffic will no longer cross the John Ross Highway. This fits-in well with my Department's undertaking to make our national and provincial routes as user-friendly as possible.

Earlier this year, as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport, we hosted a Road Safety Summit which was part of our consultation process, allowing both the Department and its stakeholders to make informed decisions on how best to tackle the challenges of safety on our roads.

Among the resolutions that emerged from the summit was the agreement that every design of a road or bridge should be done with safety in mind. It was resolved that there has to be synergy in the implementation of programs amongst all tiers of government as well as the private sector.

This year has been dedicated to 'Activism Against Road Carnage and Transgressions'. The year 2011 marks the beginning of the decade of the United Nation's commitment to Safety on our Roads. The whole world is uniting behind endeavours to curb road deaths drastically between 2011 and 2020. In South Africa we lose over 10 000 people to road carnage. This means that we have a duty to protect valuable human life and property and avoid wasting a lot of money on medical and legal expenses. We lose breadwinners and talented youths, thriving entrepreneurs and future leaders to drink driving and recklessness. Improved infrastructure provisions need not encourage motorists to be reckless due to over-speeding.

We must continue to galvanise individuals and the society at large to play a role in curbing carnage on our roads.

We say that accidents do not happen but they are caused. Preventing accidents from occurring is everyone's responsibility, especially the driver. I therefore take this opportunity to personally invite each one of you to show your commitment to road safety by supporting our campaigns. We want to give priority to the concept of self-policing to ensure that road users take the responsibility for safer roads because road safety is everybody's business.

I am pleased to learn that the BPH Billiton, through its Hillside and Bayside smelters, injects over a billion rand per year into the local economy. This is in the form of staff payments, purchasing of materials, the use of service providers, corporate social investment, rates and levies, among others. This has also contributed to Richards Bay being cited as one of the fastest-growing economic hubs of South Africa.

It is indeed heartening that apart from the construction work that has taken place here, this engineering innovation has had a positive impact on local communities. This has been seen through initiatives like bursaries for disadvantaged learners, the upgrading of schools, building of crèches and clinics and other forms of social investments.

It is befitting that we celebrate the opening of this project around the birth time of a world icon, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, uMadiba, who has called upon the world to celebrate his birthday which

falls on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, by doing something constructive to reach out to less fortunate members of society, the underdog, the poor, the sick and the destitute.

Finally, whether we are looking at public-private partnerships, or state-civil society co-operation, or government and big business working together, or just people of whatever race, class, creed or status joining hands, we are getting closer to an inevitable destiny that must be reflected in the things we do to earn the status of one of the most promising developing nations of the world with a commitment to building a non-racial, non-sexist democratic society that we so cherish.

I thank you for the opportunity to address you, and congratulate you on your achievements.