

**SPEECH NOTES FOR KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,
COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON, HON. WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE
LAUNCH OF MUVO SMARTCARD IN DURBAN ON 20 JULY 2012**

His Worship the Mayor, Councillor Nxumalo;

Councillors;

Senior Officials of Ethekwini;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

All Protocol observed.

Let me take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for allowing me to join you here today and to share some of my views with you on the latest public transport developments in eThekwini. There is nothing that makes me happier than being a part of the launch of a project that will impact positively on the lives of ordinary people.

As government, we are under no illusion about the magnitude of the task at hand and the obligation we have in ensuring that our transport system is fully responsive to the needs of our people. The official launch of the Muvo Smartcard today therefore bears testimony to our commitment as government to the development of an effective and efficient transport system in our city of Durban as a starting point.

We must therefore congratulate Ethekwini Metro for providing us with a workable model which is going to be used as our frame of reference as we implement the same system in other municipalities all over the province.

It is common knowledge that an efficient public transport in general is crucial for economic growth and to people's daily lives. Public transport makes it easier for people to interact for social, shopping, business and employment or work purposes.

Public transport facilitates access to goods, services and opportunities which is imperative to creating “liveable” and sustainable cities. A “liveable” city is one where it is easy to move around and access the services and opportunities on offer.

If you think of the great cities around the world, public transport features prominently in the organised flow of people from their homes to their places of work or leisure.

I think you as fellow citizens of our country, and eThekweni in particular, will naturally agree with me when I say, public transport is the “lifeblood” of any city. Given the economic importance of eThekweni to the region, our Province and South Africa as a whole, public transport is indeed the “lifeblood” of the city of Durban too.

As a major contributor towards the economy of the Province - and the rest of the country - the eThekweni Metro is earmarked for rapid economic growth via a concerted effort by both the public and private sectors. This is in keeping with the exciting developments that are associated with the Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network Plan (IRPTN) that should by now be regarded as a strategic focus of any City or Town in the Province.

It is estimated that eThekweni’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) amounted to more than 60% of provincial GDP in 2011. In national terms, eThekweni is the third largest economic centre and accounts for more than 10% of South Africa’s total economic output.

It stands to reason that public transport must therefore remain a critical component that enables the citizens to effectively and seamlessly move within and between Cities and Towns in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal and between provinces to access goods and services.

Given the fact that public transport should serve all classes of society, including the poor and the rich, it is imperative that any public transport system should adhere to the following principles:

- It must be user orientated i.e. the public transport system must be structured or tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the people it serves;
- It must be a fully integrated and publicly controlled service,
- It must satisfy mass rapid public transport networks and
- It must be a system that is affordable and accessible to all.

The National Transport Policy, Public Transport Strategy and Action Agenda are paving the way for the re-engineering of South Africa's public transport system in a remarkable manner.

These policies mandate Planning Authorities to develop and implement Integrated Rapid Public Transport Networks (IRPTN) and Integrated Public Transport Networks (IPTN).

I am proud to share with all of you here this morning that eThekweni Municipality is the first local government structure in the Province to prepare and adopt their IRPTN. In line with the National Public Transport Strategy and Action Agenda, the Municipality is streamlining and modernising public transport and has embarked on a journey that will make eThekweni Africa's most liveable and caring city by the year 2020 in terms of public transport services.

The first phase of the project is the development of high quality public transport linkages utilising all modes in an integrated manner between Bridge City, Durban Central, Pinetown, Umlazi and Umhlanga. There will be a strong emphasis of providing efficient movements across modes by enhancing modal interchanges, electronic ticketing and security as part of the project.

Today's historic official launch of the Muvo Smartcard is an initial step towards the implementation of eThekweni's IRPTN plan which follows the successful piloting of the card system in May and June 2012 on the PeopleMover buses.

Following today's launch, the Durban Transport buses will roll out the Muvo Smartcard with effect from the end of July, reaching commuters in Ntuzuma, Umlazi, KwaMashu and Rosburgh. Passengers will be able to buy their cards from ticket-selling outlets and top them up at various locations around the city.

The Municipality will also run an extensive publicity campaign to educate the public and raise awareness about this new fare payment system.

What then are the advantages of this for the ordinary person in the street? Well, for the average eThekweni commuter the Muvo Smartcard has numerous direct and indirect advantages.

First and foremost, it is valid for three years, compared with the bus coupon which expires after two weeks. It is also much safer to carry around than cash to buy coupons. The smartcard will allow people to plan for their travel, spend and load their cards at the beginning of each month.

In time, the smartcard will be useable across all modes of public transport, from buses to trains to taxis, with a simple tap at the start of a journey. Commuters will also be able to use the Muvo Smartcard to buy groceries and other goods and services at major retail outlets. Indeed, the Muvo smartcard will make travel more convenient and more fun.

The first small step on this journey is why we are here today? Of course today we are here to observe the official launch of the Muvo Smartcard that is now going to be introduced in the city's public buses.

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” and the Programme for improving Public Transport extends beyond today’s launch and into the next 10 years where we will be working with communities to ultimately deliver an integrated service with Metrorail and through the empowerment of the taxi industry and small bus operators, all of whom will play important roles in delivering Public Transport services.

As the Province we are greatly encouraged by the partnership and spirit of co-operation between the eThekweni Transport Authority (ETA) and my own Department towards delivering Public Transport improvements to our citizens.

Today is the first step in a long journey. It is a first step as we all, in the spirit of cooperative governance, strive to serve the citizens of eThekweni - to reward the elderly who have contributed to the development of the city and to enable the scholars and students who are the future leaders and business people who create a vibrant economy for Durban.

I would like to congratulate our Mayor uBaba uZwide, the Councillors and staff of the eThekweni Municipality, and particularly eThekweni Transport Authority and all its social and business partners, on your efforts to modernise the city and build on its rich foundation as one of the most successful cities in the world.

Today’s launch of the Muvo Smartcard is an important milestone – it is clearly an undisputed example to the rest of South Africa.

To everybody directly involved in the development and roll-out of the Muvo Smartcard, a word of thanks for your sterling efforts from my Department and the KwaZulu-Natal Government on behalf of the citizens of eThekweni and our beloved Province who see your city as their second home – especially on holidays as they flood your beaches in numbers.

In conclusion, it would be important to note that the lessons learnt from eThekweni in the implementation of its IRPTN and the launch and roll-out of the Muvo Smartcard will help us to better guide the overall direction of a totally integrated transport network across the entire province of KwaZulu-Natal for the benefit of all its citizens.

It gives me great pleasure to hereby officially launch the Muvo smartcard.

I thank you