

**SPEECH ON OCTOBER TRANSPORT MONTH LAUNCH BY
MR T.W. MCHUNU, MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND
LIAISON, KWAZULU-NATAL
Thursday, 3 October 2013**

- The Executive Mayor of EThekweni, Councillor James Nxumalo;
- Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Transport, Mr. Mxolisi Kaunda;
- Honourable Members of the Transport Portfolio Committee present;
- Members of the Interfaith;
- The leadership of COSATU;
- The leadership of transport industry stakeholders including SANTACO, KwaNabuco, the Freight Association, and VECA;
- Head of Department of Department of Transport, Mr. Sbusiso Gumbi;
- Officials and employees of Government;
- Members of the media;
- Ladies and gentlemen.

At the end of May this year I presented my Budget Vote to the Legislature and highlighted that our theme was ***“Accelerating Activism Against Road Carnages and Transgressions”***. This continues to be an appropriate theme upon which we should build on the successes of the past four years, marked by the cumulative 33.6 percent decrease in road fatalities we recorded.

October Transport Month

Earlier this week, the Minister of Transport, Ms. Dipuo Peters, officially launched the 2013 October Transport Month programme at the Bus Rapid Transit System station in the City of Tshwane, Gauteng province. At the launch on Tuesday, the Minister announced that the theme we have chosen nationally for this year is: ***“Celebrating 20 years of delivering efficient, reliable and safe transport services”***.

As the KwaZulu Natal Department of Transport, we have also planned our activities and aligned them with this year’s national theme. More importantly, and in keeping with our mandate, we also believe that the KwaZulu Natal Department of Transport has reason to celebrate.

We have broadly succeeded in providing citizens with a safe, integrated, regulated, affordable, and accessible transportation system – even as we agree there is a lot more to be done.

Over the last 20 years, this department has led from the front as the pioneer in transport infrastructure development and innovation. Since 1994 to date, under my leadership, KwaZulu Natal has been centre of excellence with campaigns that galvanise society on road safety and introduction of new ways of doing things. As such, we have hosted a number of departments and portfolio committees from other provinces who came to learn about our successes.

Allow me to highlight a few, critical successes, which we should celebrate as citizens of this province:

1. We have built new and upgraded existing road infrastructure covering thousands of kilometres. During my tenure, we constructed **1340 kilometres of new access roads**, which is the same as a return distance from Durban to Pretoria. These are roads that never existed before.
2. We upgraded and rehabilitated **970 kilometres of roads**, which is nearly the distance you travel from Johannesburg to Port Elizabeth.
3. We went to outlying, rural areas and built scores of vehicle and pedestrian bridges.
4. We patched **1080 potholes of 741 square metres** – and still continuing.
5. Citizens of KwaZulu Natal now broadly enjoy smooth movement to towns and cities. They are able to access socio-economic amenities including schools and hospitals as well as business or industry centres. These are tangible benefits of service delivery. They are visible when no child is reported to have drowned because she was crossing the Tugela River to school, like it used to happen in Sahlumbe, near Weenen. Today the people of Sahlumbe enjoy a long pedestrian and vehicle bridge and do not have to endanger their lives crossing the river.
6. Over the years, we have also advanced the transformation of the transport industry by steadily nurturing a growing base of black and women contractors. Currently, we talk of at least **35 000 registered**

emerging contractors under our *Vukuzakhe* programme, some of whom handle multi-million Rand projects. In the process, we also created more than **51 000 jobs** through a number of our initiatives including the *Zibambele* programme.

7. We built and continue to build **public transport intermodal facilities** in areas such as Ulundi, Estcourt, Umzimkhulu, KwaDukuza and Port Shepstone – as well as **100 public transport shelters** in KwaNongoma, Umtshezi, Newcastle and Abaqulusi.
8. Our **bursary programme helped 79 students** through their civil, mechanical and transport engineering studies – and today some of these graduates work for the department.
9. Close on **20 000 learners travel on our scholar transport to 206 schools**.
10. In addition to the above achievements, our department continued to prioritise peace and stability in the taxi industry through maintaining good working relationships with the stakeholders including SANTACO.
11. We remain among leaders in the introduction of new systems such as average speed over distance, automatic number plate recognition and brake tester technology.

In view of these few achievements, I'm certain that you will all agree with me when I say we have good reasons to celebrate the past two decades.

Road Safety

It is also noteworthy that the impressive development of our infrastructure has also increased traffic volumes of private light vehicles and heavy-load trucks and buses, which move people and goods. The effect of this easy movement is seen in the progress of individuals over time, better livelihoods, as well as growth of industries and the broader economy.

Despite this growth in traffic volumes, our road safety campaigns have yielded results as evidenced by the 33.6 percent decrease in road fatalities in the past three to four years.

Our duty as the department, and citizens at large, is to ensure that we remain steadfast in all our efforts to further reduce road crashes and fatalities. Let us turn the tide of the last few months when the number of road fatalities rose sharply, thereby threatening to undermine our achievements. The R66 Nkwalini bus accident that claimed the lives of eight maidens and two of their minders from *Umkhosi woMhlanga* comes to mind. More so, the truck accident on M13/ Pinetown in Fields Hill that claimed 24 lives, as per the latest figures, should never happen ever again.

I am therefore very concerned by the recent accidents' statistics which show a sharp increase in the past few months. The period June to August 2013 compared to the same period in 2012, was a bad season. **June 2013 was the worst month, recording 183 crashes (30 more than last year) and 213 fatalities (45 more than last year).**

In **September**, we saw a **decrease of 39 in crashes at 122, down from 161 in 2012; and a slight decrease in fatalities of 8, down from 174 last year to 166 last month.**

GRAPHIC FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

May to September Comparative Statistics for 2012 versus 2013

2012			2013			VARIANCES	
2012	CRASHES	FATALITIES	2013	CRASHES	FATALITIES	VARIANCE ON CRASHES	VARIANCE ON FATALITIES
May-12	135	150	May-13	117	136	-18	-14
Jun-12	153	168	Jun-13	183	213	+30	+45
Jul-12	164	176	Jul-13	162	181	-02	+05
Aug-12	126	145	Aug-13	138	157	+12	+12
Sep-12	161	174	Sep-13	122	166	-39	-8

We take a firm stance to advance Road Safety and law enforcement

Noting the statistics of road crashes and fatalities, I wish to reiterate that the power to stop the carnage is in all of us as road users.

As a province, our preference remains firm on drivers having zero alcohol in their blood when they are behind the steering wheels. Our seriousness in dealing with the scourge of road fatalities will be tested by how harsh we deal with those who break the laws of the road. It will also be determined by what obligations do we demand from drivers, owners of vehicles, as well as operators, and whether they live up to them. Certainly the laws should be much more punitive and harsher to those who break the rules. We shouldn't pay lip service to the fact that a driver's or operator's licence is a privilege that should be honoured by adhering to the requirements upon which it was granted.

In this regard, **I would like to applaud the role the media has played in the last few weeks in highlighting the seriousness of road safety.** We believe the coverage has made a positive impact that will be felt in the months and years to come if it continues.

Testing stations

As part of our tightening the loopholes, we will be proposing to Cabinet a policy change that will increase our control of testing stations to improve the quality of work. We believe that ensuring control mechanisms is crucial if we are to improve accountability and monitoring of testing stations.

In line with this, our department has already closed some 10 testing stations, which we found to have operated outside of the road traffic laws. We will soon also be serving "notices of intention" to suspend or cancel the registration of a number of vehicle examiners and vehicle testing stations as we intensify our drive to combat fraud and corruption in this aspect of transport. Undermining roadworthiness requirements in the manner some of those involved have been established is integrally linked to the high number of crashes and fatalities we see.

Provincial Number Plate change

One of the issues we will be tabling for debate in Cabinet is the Number Plate Change proposal for the province. Our provincial number plates are out of date, if not meaningless considering the advances already made by other provinces. We are therefore currently investigating the safety aspects of number plates and will in due course report on the progress.

Operation Phezukwabo

The recent, horrific accidents call for even tougher action on errant road user behaviour. That is why today I'm announcing the relaunch of "*Operation Phezukwabo*", which focuses on intensifying law enforcement for heavy-load vehicles including trucks and buses. As part of our law enforcement campaign, we established the Traffic Fine Tracing Task Team, which I announced in my May 2013 Budget Vote. This Task Team started operating on the 16th of July this year. Already, it has notched up some commendable achievements.

Among the key achievements of the team – July to September:

- A total **3 055 warrants** were served or executed which resulted in the collection of **R2.27 million in revenue**. Of the total warrants served, **787** were paid at the South African Police Service stations and **2 101** were settled in court.
- Similarly important to note is that the number of actual arrests where the accused were detained stood at **112**.
- The highest amount paid for a single warrant was **R5 100.00**; and the highest amount paid by one individual for 10 warrants was **R9 000.00**.

In addition, through the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) System our department recorded some laudable successes, which emphasises the great strides made by the Integrated Law Enforcement approach. The ANPR team works closely with SAPS, Durban Metro and the Traffic Fine Tracking Team. Among the notable achievements in the period from January to September 2013, we can confirm that:

- There were 180 stolen or hijacked vehicles recovered;
- This amounted to R56.3 million in recovered revenue;
- Stolen or counterfeit goods recovered amounted to R3.8 million;
- And there were 114 suspects arrest and 17 firearms recovered.

The October Transport Month Calendar – at a high level

As we launch the Transport Month programme, let us all realise that road safety is a collective responsibility. Noting that the common causes of accidents relate to - human error; un-roadworthiness; excessive speeding; drinking and driving; and the general disregard of the road traffic rules and regulations; let us recommit ourselves to changing the mind-set. It starts with each and every one of us, individually and acting as a collective, to put a stop to the carnage.

As such our programme for this month will entail a number of activities on transport infrastructure, integrated law enforcement, and road safety campaigns. Some of the highlights during this year's October Transport Month calendar include:

- Our provincial launch, which is the activity today;
- Infrastructure development launches – including the opening of P16 Road Upgrade covering Nkandla, Umvoti and Nquthu, and the opening of Umkhuze River Bridge;
- Regular Integrated Traffic Law Enforcement activities across Durban, Empangeni, Pietermaritzburg and Ladysmith regions;
- Road safety campaigns focusing on various transport stakeholders, modes of transport including heavy load trucks and buses, light motor vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.
- Because it is Transport month and road safety is a key element, we will also be “remembering and healing the wounds” of those who lost their lives and loved ones.
- On the Saturday, the 19th of October, we will be attending to the national launch of the Bridge City Railway station.
- This new passenger rail line will help alleviate traffic volumes on our roads, connecting the communities of Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu (INK), with existing rail infrastructure, through an underground station. The new Bridge City station would also include a bus and taxi interchange, serving as the largest rail infrastructure development project in the Durban area.

Let us unite around the common purpose of ensuring road safety for all citizens. The power to change the mind-set of all road users – including drivers of light and heavy vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists – rests with all of us. Drivers must adhere strictly to the rules of the road.

Pedestrians and passengers must always remain vigilant, and exercise their right to speak out for their safety. Owners of vehicles – both business and private – must ensure that their vehicles are properly maintained, serviced and kept in a roadworthy condition before they touch our roads.

I thank you!