

Address by the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Mr. Willie Mchunu, during the handing over of Graders by Bell Group in Pietermaritzburg, 30 October 2015

- Programme Director;
- UMgungundlovu District Mayor, Cllr. Bhamjee;
- Amakhosi present;
- Bell Group CEO;
- Bell Executive management;
- Department of Trade and Industry representatives;
- Rural Roads Transport Forums;
- Transportation Committees;
- Officials of the Department of Transport;
- Grader Operators;
- Members of the Media;
- Ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me pleasure to be part of this momentous occasion to receive graders from the Bell Group, which are our important tools in the construction and maintenance of our road network.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the African National Congress and South African Government have adopted the National Development Plan (NDP) as a blueprint for future socio-economic development strategy for the country.

The NDP has become the guideline of government's policy in addressing strategic objectives such as increasing employment, reducing poverty and improving living standards for the majority of the population. This document correctly identifies rural development as an important aspect in fighting poverty and driving inclusive economy.

In terms of the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP) developed by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and focusing on promoting labour-absorbing industrialisation, broadening participation and raising competitiveness, it is important that our local producers or manufacturers shape their businesses to synergise with the sector specific support programme.

Therefore, in this case we are looking forward to working with Bell and Desmond Equipment, which is another South African manufacturing company. This is informed by the acknowledgement that if we produce more, we create more employment opportunities and profit will be shared locally.

In our case here, perhaps the objective should be to raise volumes of machines produced but also substantially diversify and deepen the component supply chain.

From our side as the Government, the local procurement and supplier development will be undertaken to yield significant positive impacts for the domestic economy.

All of this needs to be done on the back of South Africa continuously developing itself as a globally competitive destination for automotive investment. In particular, this

applies to the motor grader production, and helps to effectively create employment in the manufacturing of vehicles and components, retail and repairs.

It is against this background that today as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport we are witnessing the handover of **30** new graders by the Bell Group, which is a South African manufacturing company.

It is the government's position that preference be given to local companies when procuring especially for our plant equipment.

In fact few years ago I had an engagement with organised labour who raised issues with regards to retrenchments that were taking place at Bell Equipment. Therefore, a transaction of this nature is our direct response to the organised labour that as the Government we are serious about creating an enabling environment for our economy to grow.

The acquisition of these additional graders at a cost of **R69 million** will help the Department in meeting its goals and objectives to maintain the gravel road network and keep it in good condition.

The majority of these graders will be replacing old graders that have passed their condemnation policy as some of them are not economically repairable.

I find it important to also mention that due to a moratorium on the filling of posts that was placed since November 2009, the department could not be able to purchase plant equipment in the absence of operators. This has cost the department a lot of money. The Auditor-General has also raised issues on the budget spent in repairing old fleet compared to buying new and reliable fleet.

The shortage of operators and plant equipment have somewhat curtailed our ability to drive aggressive service delivery – even though we have met most of our targets.

It should always be borne in mind that during the 2009 to 2014 term of government, as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport we exceeded our target of reducing the baseline of our poor to very poor road network, from 52 percent to 45 percent. We currently sit at 44 percent, which puts us amongst the top performers in the country.

We achieved this by constructing 26 kilometres of new tarred roads, meaning completely new roads. We upgraded **457** kilometres of gravel to tar roads, beating a target of 397 kilometres. We also rehabilitated (in other words re-tarred) **1 859** kilometres. We also resealed more than 10 million square metres of our road network. In addition, we constructed **1 569** kilometres of new gravel roads.

Furthermore, we built 28 against a target of 22 vehicle bridges, and constructed 61 pedestrian bridges.

We did all this, while prioritising the development of roads infrastructure in previously neglected, and therefore currently largely underdeveloped, rural communities.

We have currently filled 362 Plant Operator posts in the department and are planning to fill an additional 222 Plant Operators.

The new graders will be equitably allocated to all of the department's four regions:

Empangeni Region	:	9
Ladysmith Region	:	5
Pietermaritzburg Region	:	10
Durban Region	:	6

The Department of Transport oversees a network of **23 960** kilometres of gravel roads. In order to maintain this expansive network, the department requires a fleet of graders to do:

- Dry Blading, which is improving the road surface and drainage;
- Wet Blading, undertaken with a water cart to reshape the road, eradication of erosion and potholes;
- Betterment and Gravelling, which is improvements to the road and resurfacing with a 150 millimetre gravel wearing surface;
- Patch Gravelling, which is the resurfacing of sections of gravel road where they have become impassable with 150 millimetres wearing surface; and
- Drainage, which entails improvements to side drains.

In undertaking these responsibilities, I must also mention that as the department we are also affected adversely by the drought situation, and we call on everyone to use water sparingly and responsibly. Water plays an important role in road construction and in maintaining rural roads.

Programme director; I must also reveal that in addition to these 30 new Bell Graders, a further **22** Volvo Graders to the tune of **R53 million** will be received shortly by the department, making the total of **52** new graders to be deployed across the province.

In the next financial year (2016/ 17), we plan to purchase an additional 36 graders that will be added to the fleet.

This literally means that in two financial years, we will have 88 new grader operators.

Impela loHulumeni kaAfrican National Congress, oholwa uBaba uMsholzi uyaqhuba.

To all our grader operators, particularly those who have just joined us in the department, today we are saying the ball is in your court. It is your turn to play your part.

Ngifisa ukunamukela nginibonge ngokuthatha isinqumo sokuba yingxenye yokushintsha izimpilo zabantu bakithi ngalesikhathi esibaluleke kangaka nibe ngabashayeli bogandaganda bethu.

Siyazi ukuthi uHulumeni ezingeni lobuholi angabeka izinhlelo ezihlabahlosile kodwa uma bengekho abasebenzi abazimisele abazofezekisa lezo zinhlelo, kungabonakala sengathi uHulumeni akahlangabezani nezidingo zomphakathi.

Kodwa futhi kumele ngixwayise uma bekhona abanomqondo wokuthi kulo msebenzi bazoqhuba izenzo zenkohlakalo. Asidingi ukuzwa sesithola imibiko yokuthi kukhona

udizili olahlekayo uma kusetshenzwa ngoba abantu sebewushaya indali. Asifisi ukuzwa sekukhona abaqashwa emaceleni ukwenza inzuzo besebenzisa amathuluzi kaHulumeni.

Abantu ababheke ukusizwa nguHulumeni bathembele kunina kanti nathi kuHulumeni sithembele kunina. Ngakho-ke nani kumele nithembeke kunina kuqala ukuze nithembele kubantu.

Once again, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Bell Group for partnering with the department in this initiative, which is part of building and sustaining relations between public and private sectors. I also commend the company for the training of artisans and participating in our learnership programme targeting young people.

This life changing programme is already yielding positive results with young apprenticeships receiving NQF level 3 certificates.

There is still broad consensus in the market, ladies and gentlemen, that while South Africa has made a number of gains on the economic front, it remains a highly unequal society, with poverty, inequality and unemployment as the three main challenges.

It is our collective responsibility to change the face of our society and economy, to be one that is equal and prosperous for all citizens.

Let me also thank the RRTFs and Transportation Committees for their role in representing the interests of communities. They serve as a link between the communities and Government when it comes to issues of rural roads infrastructure development.

Indeed, service delivery cannot be achieved by Government alone, but requires a joint collaborative approach by public, private and non-governmental sectors together with citizen participation and involvement.

Let us double our efforts to change the lives of our people for the better!

I thank you.