

OPENING REMARKS BY MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON, MR. MXOLISI KAUNDA AT THE
TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE MEETING
UMHLABUYALINGANA
TUESDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2016

- Chairperson of the Transport Portfolio Committee, Honourable Sibhidla-Saphetha;
- * Mayor of Umhlabuyalingana, Cllr. Mthethwa;
- Honourable members of the Transport Portfolio Committee;
- Head of Department of Transport; Sibusiso Gumbi; and
- Officials of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport.

Good morning.

I feel very honoured to once again be a part of the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature's Transport Portfolio Committee, albeit this time from a different capacity.

Indeed today I feel an inseparable part of this committee, and correctly so after having served on it for a good seven years as chairperson. I have shared experiences and memories of members of the committee from a close working relationship we enjoyed together. Together, we exercised oversight on the KwaZulu-Natal Natal Department of Transport's service delivery programmes and operations. Together we shared views on areas of satisfactory service delivery and those of serious concern. And together, on many occasions as we are required by law, we called on the then MEC, Hon. Willies Mchunu, who is now the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, and the department, to come before us to account.

Fate has now brought us together; only this time, I am on the other side of the fence. I am now the one being called to account, because of my capacity as the MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison. This will certainly not be an easy ride. Precisely because of my experience on and exposure to areas of service delivery concern, my task will possibly be one of the most challenging.

I will have to be the one, honourable members, to explain to you that, perhaps our understanding of the nuances and dynamics of issues, was far from being realistic.

Having said all of the above, in this very first appearance in the Transport Portfolio Committee, which also has a new chairperson, I wish to submit myself and the department for scrutiny.

Honourable Chairperson, let me also use this opportunity to congratulate and welcome you in your new role! Beyond this, let me assure you that I am always available, should you need support, as you go about exercising your responsibility the best you can.

Honourable members; we meet just over four (4) months since I assumed the role of MEC. It has been a hectic induction, short of baptism of fire. For I came at the height of local government elections, and had to hit the ground running. On that score, I am happy to report that our province held free and fair elections, and this is thanks to the Multi-Political Party platform, which we have sustained as a province.

100 Days in Office

My first 100 days in office have been as much exciting as they have been gruelling. They did not offer space for honeymooning. In fact, from the onset, we were required to escalate our service delivery programmes. And so it was that we travelled the length and breadth of this province, to extend services to the people. Among others:

- On the 21st of June, we went to eMsinga to introduce contractors to work on the upgrade of P280, phase 1 of which is 16 kilometres long and is expected to be completed in 2020/21 financial year.

In this project which will create 324 work opportunities and 60 learnership opportunities for the young people, the department is investing R234.3 million. We launched the beginning of construction of P6 Tugela Ferry River Bridge, which is a R97 million investment that will create more than 20 work opportunities. This is the new eMsinga Bridge, which will be a dual carriageway and once completed will replace the existing, historic iron structure that will in future be used as a pedestrian bridge. We also announced the construction of the Buffalo Bridge in Pomeroy, which will be completed in the next financial year.

- Working with the Premier, we hosted the Provincial Taxi Indaba on the 30th of June, which brought together some 3 000 members of the taxi industry; provincial and regional executive structures and operators under one roof. At this successful indaba, we discussed all issues affecting the taxi industry, including peace and stability as well as looking at the possibility of lifting the moratorium on issuing new operating licences.
- On the 1st of July, together with the Minister of Transport, Honourable Dipuo Peters, we opened the Ballito Interchange and main road P445, which together were an investment of more than R200 million, in KwaDukuza in Ilembe District.
- On the 5th of July, we handed over the completed, R87 million's state-of-the-art eMtshezi Public Transport Intermodal Facility, which is being used by minibus taxis and buses as well as traders. On the same day, we marked the beginning of the upgrade of 9.5 kilometres-long P179 in Enesdale, which will be completed in 2018/19, and will create 60 jobs. We also went to kick off the construction of a R12 million Ncibidwane Bridge, expected to be completed in the next financial year.
- Other infrastructure programmes included the following:
 - * Sod-turning for the upgrade of five kilometres of P415 in Mandeni, which stretches to Tugela Mouth;
 - * Sod turning for the upgrade of D280, which stretches for 11 kilometres in Dannhauser.
 - * Sod-turning for P706 in Nkandla, a R418 million investment in the upgrade of the 33.2 kilometres-long road from gravel to tar. This project will create more than 206 jobs and 80 learnership opportunities for the youth.
 - * Sod-turning of 10 eBilanyoni access roads in eDumbe - as well as sod-turning of P303, a 31.28 kilometres long road, also in eDumbe, which will be upgraded to tar for an estimated R350.7 million.
 - * Sod-turning of D135 in KwaKhoza in Umlalazi, which is a 24 kilometres long road that will be upgraded for R185 million and create 160 work opportunities. This road upgrade was first mooted by the late President Nelson Mandela during his visit to KwaKhoza in the late 1990's.
 - * In eMnambithi within the uThukela District, we unveiled the upgrade to tar of L1524 in Peacetown and 12 kilometres of P187 in Bluebank, an investment of R219 million.

Road Safety

Honourable Members, road safety remains a perennial issue of grave concern. Our province and country continue to record high numbers of road crashes and fatalities daily. Our roads have effectively become sites of mass murders. In many instances, it is quite easy to observe that these horrific crashes are avoidable, if only all road users, especially drivers, simply respected road traffic rules and signs.

One of my first assignments in this regard, was to attend to the funeral of seven people, who lost their lives in eJozini, in this very district, when a bakkie collided into a truck near Umkhuze. Another one, was to attend to a mass funeral of 11 people in Harding, who were also travelling on a bakkie while returning from a church service.

What these crashes indicate is that, indeed, "road safety is our collective responsibility". As has been pronounced by my predecessor, we need to redouble our efforts to mount a winning campaign to reduce road crashes and deaths. All stakeholders must play their part. For me, this is one area of strategic focus, going forward.

Public Transport Stability

Over the last four months, we have held more than five engagements with public transport, especially the taxi industry through the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO). These engagements have been progressive, building on the achievements of the past, which include signed cooperative agreements with taxi associations in formerly conflict-ridden areas.

These are interventions that are proactive to create platforms for dialogue as part of our efforts to find lasting peace, stability and growth of the taxi industry. Areas that we continue to watch closely remain the greater KwaDukuza including Maphumulo, Port Shepstone, Newcastle, eMnambithi and eThekwini. Furthermore, we will continue to introduce the rank management system, including security measures to tighten security controls in taxi ranks and ensure the safety of commuters.

October Transport Month

Honourable Members; we launched our October Transport Month programme a week ago in Emanyiseni, in eJozini, by announcing a R650 million investment in the upgrades of D1842 and 1841 roads. For the first time, the people of eManyiseni will have tarred roads, which will transform their lives positively. This is the essence of the African National Congress-led government; changing people's lives for the better!

We also held a multi-disciplinary law enforcement road block at Bhambanana T-junction, to create awareness about road safety, traffic law compliance and cross-border security. This part of the province is notorious for the high rate of cross-border crimes, including theft of vehicles and other property, which are taken over the border to Mozambique. I am pleased to share with you that the Provincial Executive is looking at this matter with a view to investing resources that will put an end to cross border crime. These include installing New Jersey barriers covering initially about 25 kilometres of the border, the reinstatement of the cross border task team and training of 40 community safety volunteers.

Furthermore, our October Transport Month programme entails the following – among others:

- Ongoing Multi-Disciplinary and Inter-Provincial Road Block (involving KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Free State provinces);
- The Opening on the Port Shepstone Provincial Regulatory Entity Offices on Friday, the 14th of October;
- The Signing of Subsidised Bus Services transformation contracts in Richards Bay, in King Cetshwayo District on Tuesday, the 18th of October;
- Healing of the Wounds in oPhongolo on Sunday, the 23rd of October;
- The launch of our department's Radical Economic Transformation Strategy, which is scheduled for Friday, the 28th of October; and
- Provincial Public Transport Prayer to be held in Newcastle on Saturday, the 29th of October.

As I conclude, I wish to highlight the point that economic transformation is going to occupy most of our focus as we intensify service delivery programmes across communities. We remain alive to the needs of the citizens, especially the African majority that lives in largely underdeveloped rural communities. For us, it is very clear that the fruits of freedom and wealth must be shared equally among citizens of this province and country.

Your support in the drive for economic transformation, which is aimed at increasing the participation of Black people in general and Africans in particular in the mainstream economy, is very critical.

As always, we look forward to the Portfolio Committee's continued inputs and active participation in our programmes broadly and those specifically relating to the safety of citizens on our roads and in communities.

I thank you!
Ends.

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