

2010 October, Public Transport Month

By Thabang Machobane

Preface

During the month of April in 2005, the Transport Lekgotla, attended by the National Minister, MECs and HODs resolved that October 2005 will be officially declared Public Transport Month. Its purpose is to highlight the importance of public transport, road safety and challenges of transforming our public transport into an efficient and effective one. Within the spirit of intergovernmental relations, the National and Provincial Departments as well as Agencies of Transport worked together in developing the National Programme.

Given the fact that South Africa is a signatory to both the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol, it is fitting to acknowledge the work being done at these forums. Hence, this year's initiative will ensure that programmes to address greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions from the transport sector are properly acknowledged and supported.

Provincial Context

In Gauteng, the Provincial Government in collaboration with Local Municipalities also officially declared the month of October as the Public Transport Month. This commitment was engraved in what we call the *Gauteng Inter-government Transport Charter* which seeks to give a joint focus and common purpose to achieve their endeavours. In supporting this national campaign, the Gauteng Department of Transport has driven this initiative in which throughout the month of October various stakeholders and role players have been engaged in activities to profile our

public transport system as safe, reliable, accessible and affordable as well as fighting against Environmental Degradation. This approach was themed: “*Green Transport Contributing to cleaner and sustainable environment*” in the context of transforming transport and infrastructure for creating a significant shift in the trajectory of Gauteng’s economy and catalyzing a “quantum leap” into the global economy.

SDM Perspective

This year, October 2010 campaign of encouraging people to utilize public transport has been practiced beyond both Public Transport Month and Car Free Day so as to showcase our initiatives for immediate and long-term improvement in the public transport service delivery. This campaign is key for the whole District to worsen and discourage congestion in our roads due to the expanding rate of private car ownership, hence the key activities of this campaign embedded as follows:

- Launch of transport infrastructure projects
- Promoting clean and environment friendly facilities and transport
- Promote and Raise Road safety Awareness
- Launch campaign on availability of public transport after late hours particularly, particularly after 7pm

Based on the foregone discussions, there were lots of events aligned to the aforementioned activities spreading within the jurisdictional area of the District. Of paramount important is the official launch of the campaign, the sod turning event by the MEC for Public Transport, Roads and Work as well as the Draft Integrated Transport Plan (ITP) Workshop which will assess the impact of this campaign on the SDM transport system.

The Launch of the Campaign

On the 8th October, the MMC for Transport and Infrastructure, Clr Simon Maphalla officially launch this magnificent campaign with a Transport Summit at Vaal Teknorama under the provincial theme “*Green Transport Contributing to cleaner and sustainable environment*”. In his opening remarks, Clr Maphalla recognized this Summit as a participatory forum for communication in close co-operation with recognized service providers such as Buses, Mini-Bus, Buses, Metered Taxis, Education Transport Operators and numerous role – players from the Commuter Organisation (GCO) resulted in this initiative expanding to play a significant role in efforts to achieve improvements in the Sedibeng transport system. Moreover, this is a platform to show a significant progress in areas of co-operation and communication with the relevant stakeholders, said Clr. Maphalla.

Already confirmed as the Chairman of this gathering, Mr. Sarhili Manqa, the Director for Transport and Infrastructure offered a professional insight and advice by setting a tone and presented the Programme of Action (POA) outlining the objectives of the entire campaign. In his ambitious presentation, the Director sensitized the Taxi operators to avail their service particularly after 7pm. The discussions reflected this diversity of context and policies based on the POA. In the keynote address, the MMC for Transport and Infrastructure described the SDM’s plans for a New Bophelong Intermodal. In turn, this gathering ends with a more detailed understanding of the unique conditions found in the District, and that public transport service improvement must not only be technical, but also be social.

The Sod Turning Event

Since the 1994 political breakthrough, the major challenge was to revitalize and utilize all inherited state assets such as buildings, ranking termini and airports, especially all underutilized assets within the boundaries of the District. As part of government we have been visible and decisive in our intervention in a quest to resuscitate the underutilized infrastructure as part of the

Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). To heed this call, the Gauteng Provincial Government in consultation SDM and Emfuleni local Municipality has initiated a project in our District known as the *Bophelong Intermodal Facility*.

In line with the POA for 2010 October Public Transport Month (PTM), sod-turning event by the MEC for Public Transport, Roads and Work was also identified as one of the activities for this campaign. On the 26th October at Bophelong human settlement, the Gauteng Provincial Government in consultation SDM and Emfuleni local Municipality launched this facility. During this event, the Program Director, Clr Maphalla commented that large infrastructural projects of this nature will provide jobs at the construction and implementation phases and stimulate local and regional economic growth. While delivering the speech on behalf of the SDM Executive Mayor – Clr Simon Mofokeng, the MMC of Health & Public Safety – Clr. Maipato Tsokolibane indicated how pleased the Executive Mayor is with the current development that will benefit both the Emfuleni and Sedibeng community at large. Also in present on behalf of the Emfuleni Executive Mayor was the Emfuleni Speaker – Clr. Greta Hlongwane who praised the Province by rolling this project to create job opportunities for the community so that they should also pay the rates and taxes (Masakhane). Amongst other dignitaries who were present MMC of Enviroment – Clr. Dorcus Raditsela and Deputy Director General (DDG) Noxolo Mahitjwa who represented the MEC of Transport – Bheki Nkosi. The arrival of this project heralds many changes in the urban landscape, concur the DDG. This event ends with a jovial mood where representatives showed a significant progress and co-operation with the District.

A Draft Integrated Transport Plan (ITP) Workshop

This campaign will end in style with a two-day workshop on the Draft ITP to be convened on the 30th Novermber to 1st December 2010. This participatory forum will became an enabler and mobiliser in the transport sector. At this stage, Argus Gibb Consulting Firm was appointed to prepare the District –wide ITP.

Against this background an ITP Steering Committee was formed as an interactive process between the District, three local municipalities and transport operators (when a need arises) in

order to pool ideas and a unique development experiences. The premise behind this Committee is the promotion of the public transport over private vehicles and freight transport. Above all, topic such an Operating License Strategy, Rationalisation Plan and Public Transport Plan are also included. In that workshop, there are number of common and recurring themes which will find expression in such a Draft ITP in a co-ordinated and integrated manner for a sustainable transport management.