

**Speech by MEC for Roads and Transport, Limpopo Mr. Lehlogonolo  
Masoga, MPL, on the occasion of the Provincial Launch of the  
October Transport Month 2013 held at the Fusion Boutique Hotel,  
Polokwane, 03 October 2013**

Programme Director

Members of the Portfolio Committee for Roads and Transport

Head of Department of Roads and Transport

Councilors responsible for Roads and Transport

Municipal Managers and officials from various institutions including the  
Department of Roads and Transport

CEOs of our Entities

Representatives from the Road Accident Fund

Representatives from the Limpopo Provincial Taxi Council

Representatives from the Provincial Road Safety Council

Representatives from the Limpopo Operating License Board

Representatives from the Provincial Driving School Association

Officials from the Department of Roads and Transport

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

### ***The vibrant and dynamic department***

Thank you very much for honouring us with your presence here today. Today marks the 76<sup>th</sup> day since my appointment as the Member of the Executive Council responsible for Roads and Transport. This department has in the past earned itself a notorious reputation for being continuously in the news for wrong reasons. I wish to take this opportunity to inform members of the public that my perceptions and subjective judgment of this department based on the news I consumed from the media were proven wrong in the last two months I have spent in the department.

I can confirm with no equivocation that I have discovered that, what I and many South African's used to perceive as a dysfunctional heaven of corruption department is actually not the case. The Department of Roads and Transport happens to be a vibrant and dynamic well-oiled machinery operated by dedicated men and women of integrity who appreciate their role as civil servants. This is a department which is the highest contributor in terms of provincial revenue and job creation. The same department that has changed the road infrastructure landscape of our province. The department that connects villages and towns, corner to corner with a stretch of over 7000km of tarred roads. The same institution that operates an uninterrupted airline between Polokwane and OR Tambo International

Airport with an international airport license. Nevertheless, fate had it upon this department that it fell prey to a massive scandal involving personalities and entities that enjoyed high profile media attention and loss of massive public funds. Although this was an isolated incident, our department could not escape the curse of collateral damage. In the same breath, we remain resolute to confront the demons of corruption and maladministration wherever they rear their ugly heads. Just yesterday I signed off a submission for the cancellation of a driver's license issued in contravention of the prescribed rules and regulations in one of our centers in Sekhukhune district. Few weeks ago we also withdrew an operating license for one of our accredited private testing station in Vhembe district which violated the terms and conditions of the license. As part of our endeavour to improve service delivery and combat fraud and corruption, we have launched yet another Computerised Learner Driver's License System in Giyani in July 2013. It is our intention to roll-out this service across the province, including new vehicle registration points in post offices. It will be unfair of me to both the Head of Department and her team if I do not announce today that our department has received an **unqualified audit** opinion by the Auditor General for 2012/2013 financial year. We hope to come out with



a clean bill of health next year in line with the Operation Clean Audit's expectation.

### **The role of transport in the economy**

Efficient transport is a critical component of economic development, globally and nationally. Transport availability affects global development patterns and can be a boost or a barrier to economic growth within individual nations. Transportation investments link factors of production together in a web of relationships between producers and consumers to create a more efficient division of production, leverage geographical comparative advantage, and provide the means to expand economies of scale and scope. Transport infrastructure and services are not a luxury but a necessity of life. Above all, efficient, reliable and sustainable public transport services helps close the gap between the rich and poor and rural and urban divide. As a province, we can only become the real gateway to Southern Africa if we have proper transport network and services to enable the smooth movement of people and goods.

### **The October Transport Month**

Tuesday, 01 October 2013, marked the 08<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the declaration of the month of October as the Transport Month after the 2005

National Transport Lekgotla. On Tuesday, the Minister of Transport Mme Dipuo Peters officially launched the October Transport Month in Tshwane under theme ***“Celebrating 20 years of delivering efficient, reliable and safe transport services”***. Minister Peters said on the same occasion that *“during Transport Month, the Department of Transport, provincial transport departments, State Owned Entities as well as the private sector and other stakeholders seek to highlight the advances we have made at the same taking stock and focusing on the transport challenges that are ahead of us.*

*We strongly view transport systems as vital to our way of life, connecting people with jobs, schools, shops, friends and family. However, the greatest challenges to reliable journeys remain congestion and accidents. Congestion is depressing for motorists and has serious consequences for the economy and the environment although we have made a number of milestones in this regard in our transport system”*. Indeed, I fully agree with the minister that the transport system is vital to our way of life. We are all meeting here this morning, thanks to our transport system, both private and public. It is therefore incumbent upon all of us to make our roads as safe as they possibly can be by reducing road crashes.

## **The cost of road crashes**

The International Transport Forum's (ITF) latest Road Safety Annual Report, released in May 2013, ranked South Africa the worst, out of 36 other countries, when it came to the number of road fatalities. Road fatalities per 100 000 inhabitants was at 27.6 deaths in 2011 – a shocking statistic when compared to developed countries like North America with 10.4 or Australia with 5.6. But those developing countries included in the report did not exceed South Africa's road death toll. Both Argentina and Colombia reached around 12, while Malaysia came off second worst with 23.8. The report also estimated economic cost of South Africa's road crashes to be around R307-billion each year, *“that's more than what Transnet has budgeted to fund its ambitious seven-year infrastructure build programme”*, quipped reporter Lisa Steyn.

This cost includes loss of manpower due to fatalities and injuries, emergency medical services, post-crash services such as road repairs and clean-up operations, compensation paid out by our agency, the Road Accident Fund, etc. The RAF alone pays out at least R15bn to victims of road crashes each year. Of this amount, R1bn is for continued medical support of those who get injured during crashes. Through its Community Outreach Programme, "RAF on the Road," the Fund is able to swiftly

register and settle claims on location. This programme also assists in cutting out the proverbial "Middleman" and ensures a satisfactory pay out to the claimant without lawyers claiming a fair share of the payout.

### **A decade of Action for Road Safety**

On 02 March 2010, governments around the world took the historic decision to increase action to address the road safety crisis over the next ten years. The UN General Assembly resolution proclaiming a Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 was tabled by the Government of the Russian Federation and co-sponsored by more than 90 countries. The Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 aims to save lives by halting the increasing trends in road traffic deaths and injuries world-wide.

Through the Decade, Member States, with the support of the international community, commit to actions in areas such as developing and enforcing legislation on key risk factors: limiting speed, eliminating drunk-driving, and increasing the use of seatbelts, child restraints and motorcycle helmets. Efforts will also be undertaken to improve emergency trauma care, upgrade road and vehicle safety standards, promote road safety education and enhance road safety management generally.



This recent initiative comes on the heels of the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, hosted by the Government of the Russian Federation in November 2009. The "Moscow Declaration" issued by ministers and senior officials from 150 countries, underlines the importance of protecting all road users, in particular those who are most vulnerable such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

### **Our role in reducing road fatalities**

As a caring government we will not rest until we rid our roads of these unnecessary deaths. We will ensure that our aim of having accident free roads continues without hindrance. From now moving forward there will be high visibility of our traffic officers throughout the province to strengthen law enforcement and to further ensure free and smooth flow of traffic until the festive season and beyond. During this period motor vehicles operating and entering our province will be subjected to heightened inspections on the road to ensure that only roadworthy vehicles are allowed to operate while the un-roadworthy ones face possible impoundment and or hefty fines. No unroadworthy vehicle will be allowed to continue with the journey as the safety of our people cannot be compromised. We call on all road users to join us in this drive to change their behavior for better and safer roads.



In realizing the impact road crashes cause to the lives and economy of the province and the country, the Limpopo provincial Department of Roads & Transport, has taken it upon itself to make sure that accidents and deaths throughout Limpopo are reduced dramatically in line with the prescripts of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

During this Transport Month, the province will work even harder, as we have already done since the launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety, towards achieving its goals of halving road crashes by 2020. In this regard we will make sure that all relevant stakeholders; individual road users and entities are enlightened through a robust road safety awareness campaigns; road-shows; intensified law enforcement operations as well as empowering school going children through road safety related education.

As a department, we therefore pledge to support all road safety initiatives by any concerned civil society institutions and individuals that are aimed at making our roads safer forever. From tomorrow until Saturday, we will be joining the national and other provincial departments in Gauteng where we will be mapping out an improved way of addressing road safety challenges in our country at the National Road Safety Summit convened by the Minister of Transport.

## **Stray animals causing crashes**

The damage to vehicles and loss of lives caused by stray animals is a very serious matter that needs to be stopped. The memory of losing one of the country's most promising up and coming coach, Limpopo's Shining Star Thomas "Chincha Guluva" Madigage still lingers fresh in our memories as if it happened yesterday. It has opened the healing wounds of the loss of another Shining Star on our roads in the recent past, Lesley Manyathela. This October Transport Month we will be interacting with livestock owners, traditional leader and livestock forums about road accidents caused by unattended stray animals along the public roads. We will also be meeting with communities during our outreach campaigns where we will address the issue of stray animals extensively.

## **Public transport system**

In her address during the official launch of the National October Transport Month, Minister of Transport Dipuo Peters said that "sound economic infrastructure is a precondition for economic growth. It is for this reason that the department of Transport has intensified efforts to develop and improve South African transport system to serve as a catalyst for social and economic development". To this effect, we wish to take this opportunity to congratulate and acknowledge the City of Polokwane for the role they are

playing in creating a safe, reliable and efficient mode of transport through their Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network.

The implementation of this project will go a long way in contributing towards the social mobility of our people and economic development of the City of Polokwane, thus putting it in par with the best cities in the country and beyond. We continue to support municipalities, particularly in the outskirt areas such as Thulamela in piloting the concept of inter-modal transport facilities to contribute in improving public transport system and the quality of the lives of our people.

### **The capacity of our entities to deliver**

At the center of our capacity to roll out the road transport infrastructure and air transport services lie two agencies, RAL and GAAL. I must hasten to indicate that the two entities have been limping in the last few years bedeviled by corporate governance paralysis which affected their functionality. I wish to assure the people of Limpopo that we will do everything in our power to resuscitate these institutions and put them on a sound recovery pedestal, for them to fulfill their obligations. In the next week we will call for the nomination of the new RAL board after the dissolution of the former board, and we hope to appoint the CEO and several executives by the end of the month. We will also appoint the board



of GAAL before the end of the month after consultation with EXCO and the minister. I also wish to announce, that I have since decided to repatriate the preventative road maintenance function back to RAL where it belongs, in line with the provisions of the law. We are in a process of appointing an internal engineering service unit with the support of a R10million grant from DoT.

### **Building capacity within the sector**

Skills development remains at the heart of the current government's agenda to promote development. As the provincial department, we have always been at the forefront in developing skills in the heavy motor vehicles sector in the province through our "Driver of the Year Competition" (DOTY). The competition also serves as an incentive for the business sector to invest in advance driver training.

The Department of Roads and Transport in Limpopo has concluded discussions which will be sealed with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with TETA (Transport Education and Training Authority) to unleash an ambitious skills development programme which includes amongst other things training of new traffic recruits, training and placement of supply chain trainees, subsidy for the interns, training of artisans and a comprehensive capacity building programme for bus and taxi operators.

We are extremely pleased with this human capital development partnership geared to benefit our people.

### **Limpopo host the President of the Republic during the OTM**

We are pleased to announce that investment in road infrastructure has been flowing in Limpopo in the last few years led by SANRAL. This national public entity is investing millions of rands in building and maintaining various roads projects in the province including the commonly known N1. The agency is currently spending over a billion rand in our province supporting our roads infrastructure network. This investment is in keeping with the ideals of the National Development Plan, which puts infrastructure development and improvement at the top of its agenda.

To this effect, we will together with the President of the Republic of South Africa Jacob Zuma, the Minister of Transport, Dipuo Peters and Premier of Limpopo Stan Mathabatha officially open the completed R81 and R71 roads which links Polokwane and other towns such as Giyani and Tzaneen and connecting communities spread through the two districts of Capricorn and Mopani. This event will be held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2013 at the University of Limpopo. SANRAL has further committed to widen the R71 road passing through the gates of our two most revered churches at Moria and Boyne. This project is done with a further injection of R30million over

and above the half a billion spent on the R71 and R81. Obviously this intervention will go a long way to ease traffic at that part of the road especially during the popular annual pilgrimages. We are humbled by SANRAL's commitment to extend the similar support on R37 at the gate of the Podingoane branch of the St. Engenas Zion Christian Church.

### **Infrastructure backlog**

While we appreciate the investment made thus far, it is only fair that we share with you our challenge regarding the road infrastructure backlog. Some of you may be aware that Limpopo has a stretch of just above 22 000km of which only 7000km is tarred. This backlog is two times the annual budget of Limpopo to cover in terms of rand values. However, in the immediate, we are desperately in need of at least R10billion just to clear the backlog of projects which were initiated and could not be cleared due to budgetary constraints. We appreciate the patience of our communities and do not intend to stretch it any further. We commit to honour and fulfill the social contract entered into between communities and their government. Although we are on the verge of the end of this term of office, we shall with the little time given to us to serve – make the necessary difference.

As part of our plans, we will be resuscitating the Roads Infrastructure Planning Forum this month that brings together the provincial department



and its entities, districts and local municipalities to establish a joint planning platform and work towards developing a Provincial Roads Infrastructure Master Plan.

## **Conclusion**

As we declare the October Transport Month in our province open, we once again send warning bells to the reckless road users and operators of un-roadworthy vehicles that there will be no escape route. Ensure that you respect the road rules and that your vehicles are roadworthy or otherwise you will be counted amongst the statistics of those found on the wrong side of the law. We will have no mercy because we want to claim back our roads from reckless users. Our people deserve better treatment and services. It is about time that these services must not only be provided, but must be seen to be provided.

We encourage the people of Limpopo to use public transport during this month and beyond, so as to reduce traffic congestion on the roads as we concur with the Minister that “congestion is depressing for motorists and has serious consequences for the economy and the environment”.

To our partners in the media sector we call upon you to support the activities of the department during this important month by fulfilling one of

your important roles, i.e. to educate and inform the public. The details of the month programme are contained in the distributed packs. I wish to thank all the role players and partners for their continued support, the Head of Department and her team including our men and women in uniform and the National Intervention Team led by Mr. Mathabatha Mokonyama. Let us join hands for the future of our province because if we work together - we all can achieve more.

**Thank you very much.**