

First Anniversary of the BRT

31 August 2010

Welcome address delivered by the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Councillor Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the First Anniversary of the BRT Rea Vaya Presidential suite, FNB Stadium [Soccer City], Soweto - Johannesburg

Programme Director: MMC for Transport - Rehana Moosajee
Honourable Minister of Transport and Guest of Honour – Minister Ndebele
MEC for Roads and Transport – MEC Nkosi
MEC for Community Safety – MEC Mosunkutu
The Speaker of Council, Clr Nkele Ntingane
The Chief Whip of Council, Clr Nonceba Molwele
Members of the Mayoral Committee
The Chairperson and Members of the Section 79 Portfolio Committee on Transport
City Manager – Mavela Dlamini
Executive Director Transport: Ms Lisa Seftel
The Facilitation Team – Led by Mr Charles Nupen
The Taxi Industry Steering Committee – Led by Mr Sicelo Mabaso and Mr Eric Motshwane
The Taxi Industry Technical Advisory Team – Led by Mr Darko Skribinsik
The CEO of Clidet – Ms Jackie Huntley
Leaders of the Greater Johannesburg Regional Taxi Council and Top 6 Taxi Management
Representatives of Commuter Organisations
Representatives of Organisations for People With Disabilities
The Media
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentleman

Programme Director, it is a great pleasure to welcome all of you to this occasion - the first Anniversary of Rea Vaya BRT.

Dr Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy". We are grateful to the many men and women, some seated amongst us here today, who have demonstrated commitment and dedication, who have made great sacrifices to make this project a great success that it is today.

The Bus Rapid Transit, Rea Vaya - a dream, the subject of study tours and policy papers – was one year ago, to this day, born in the City of Johannesburg. Perhaps, Programme Director, as we gather to celebrate this one year milestone of Rea Vaya, it is an opportune time for us to reflect on a momentous year.

Let me confess, that as we reflect on a year gone by – we do so with mixed emotions. We acknowledge the intricacies of such a complex undertaking. We accept that this has been a journey. We must strive to ensure that every moment is aptly captured, remembered and appreciated.

Such crafting and articulation should not water down the historic and visionary nature of this project.

When one thinks BRT, memories abound. They include amongst others, the following:

- The decision by the City of Johannesburg in November 2006 to enrich the ideas of our Integrated Transport System and implement the BRT,
- The decision to provide full support to the Taxi Industry BRT Steering Committee, by amongst others, making available technical advisors of their choice, to enable them to engage government on an equal footing,
- The Study Tour to Bogota and Perreira in 2007 and the subsequent signing of Memoranda of Understanding with Top 6, Greater Johannesburg Regional Taxi Council and later Putco and Metrobus,
- From the very beginning, the careful consideration of issues and the frank and robust discussions
- The sod turning to mark the beginning of construction at Charlton Terrace, Ellis Park and the launch of a prototype station in November 2008 in Joubert Park,
- The ongoing public participation process on station and bus look and feel, and route issues,
- A successful Public Transport Summit held at Nasrec in August 2009, where over 500 delegates urged the City of Johannesburg to continue with its efforts to build a fast, safe and affordable public transport system,
- The determination by mini bus taxi operators to acquire additional skills and drive Rea Vaya buses,
- The advent and commencement of formal negotiations in August 2009,
- The overwhelming support for the unveiling of the buses at the Rea Vaya Family Fun Day at Thokoza Park in Soweto last year,
- The birth of Rea Vaya exactly one year ago.
- The City of Johannesburg being nominated by the ITDP as a runner up for the Sustainable Transport Award 2009, awarded in January 2010,
- The introduction of additional feeder and complementary services in April and May 2010,

Rea Vaya has indeed not just been an ordinary transport intervention. It has been part of important significant recent developments in the city and the country:

- The role played by Rea Vaya during the PRASA/Metrorail strike,
- Rea Vaya buses packed with Blue Bulls supporters on their way to Orlando in the period leading to the 2010 FIFA World Cup,
- Rea Vaya buses and stations becoming meeting places of the world's people during the FIFA World Cup,
- The ongoing legacy and Rea Vaya's relation to a contribution that we are making to the building of a green economy and the creation of sustainable jobs.

Whilst there is so much to celebrate, all of these should be in a fairly measured tone, as we note the following:

- The shootings at buses in which eleven innocent commuters, and drivers were injured and a young man, Phumlani Mayisela, was killed,
- The tragic and sudden passing of Mr Siphon Mntambo a stalwart in the Taxi Industry and one of the guiding lights of this project,
- The ongoing harassment of some in the taxi industry for their decision to participate in the Rea Vaya project,

- Some days of no service, even though these were far fewer and not that significant, due to industrial action.

Program Director - last Monday, one year and two weeks after the negotiations between affected taxi operators and the City started – the negotiations on Phase 1A were finally concluded. It ended with the signing of an agreement on the final fee per km and payment arrangements between the City, the affected taxi operators and the Bus Operating Company.

Programme Director, in the course of these negotiations, over five key agreements were signed. These were not standard agreements. They were uniquely crafted to respond to the particular issues facing the negotiations and collectively considered, proposed and debated by the two teams [from the city and the taxi industry].

In this broad context, please allow me to salute the Negotiations Facilitation Team, led by Charles Nupen, for managing and navigating this process so successfully.

Over the next few days, we will experience the signing of acceptance to the written offer that the City has made to the industry to become formal shareholders and to individually accept the results of the negotiations.

Let me also salute the role played by the 'special purpose vehicle' or temporary company, Clidet, led by Ms Jackie Huntley. In the same vein, we also acknowledge the role played by the following:

- Clidet signed a management contract with Metrobus.
- In a depot leased from Putco, they opened up shop...
- Putco also kindly seconded some staff and this wonderfully committed group of people, have been delivering the service since then; and
- The overall contribution of staff and the Department, a word appreciation goes specifically to the ED: Transport, Lisa Seftel, and the MMC for Transport, Clr Rehana Moosajee.

Programme Director, let us remind ourselves that this is the first full BRT in Africa, and in our country.

Tonight not far from here, there is another celebration. It is the 13th Annual Business Day Business in Arts South Africa award ceremony. And the art work on the Rea Vaya BRT stations is one of the finalists.

Rea Vaya is not just a project of the City of Johannesburg. It is a truly South African undertaking. In this regard, the President has set a tone and provided crucial guidance and leadership at critical moments. Allow me to also salute the invaluable role played by the National Minister of Transport and his Deputy. We are grateful not only for the funding, but for their ongoing guidance and sound advice.

Let us also recognise the crucial role played by the Gauteng Provincial Government in supporting Rea Vaya. Special appreciation goes to the MEC for Transport and MEC for Community Safety as well as their teams.

The BRT is like a young child. It is a project that has great potential. Let us together nurture it and grow it to its full potential. Let us remember that it is about people. The quality of life of people.

Once again, thank you for honouring this invitation. Welcome to this special occasion. Please enjoy the evening.