

WELCOME SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG, CLR MPHOS PARKS TAU, AT THE LAUNCH OF PHASE 1B OF THE REA VAYA BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) SYSTEM AT FRANK BROWN PARK, MILPARK, 14 OCTOBER 2013

Let me begin with a quote:

"If you are humble, you are no threat to anybody. Some behave in a way that dominates others. That's a mistake. If you want the cooperation of humans around you...and you do that by being genuine and humble. You know that other people have qualities that may be better than your own. Let them express them."

— Nelson Mandela

These words probably served as a good guide during their long hours of tough negotiations between the public transport operators and the City officials on the eve of the launch of the Rea Vaya Phase 1B bus route. Finally last Thursday evening, they concluded an equitable 'deal' on these important aspects:

- In principle agreement on how much and how the new taxi industry and PUTCO shareholders will be remunerated
- A sustainable business model
- Removal of competing vehicles from the route and the scrapping or disposal of old and unsafe cars
- Extensive mini bus taxi driver empowerment programme to enable them, inter-alia, to become bus drivers
- Participation of the affected operators in the delivering of the interim services for the next six months, these services which we have come today to launch.

Programme Director, Premier of Gauteng Nomvula Mokonyane, Deputy Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga, Gauteng MEC for Transport and Road Ismail Vadi; Johannesburg MMC for Transport Christine Walters; Mercedes Benz CEO Dr Martin Zimmerman; Marcopolo General Manager Mr Rodrigo Aves, Top Six Regional Taxi Association Chairperson Mr Shabangu and your local Chairperson Mr Godfrey Smith, Piotrans Chairperson Mr Kenneth MK Mohlala, transport Portfolio Members, Fellow Councillors, Political Parties, City Manager Mr Trevor Fowler, Senior Managers Officials of Council, Taxi Associations leaders, the Business Community, Commuter Leaders, Tertiary Institution Leaders, Media, Ladies and Gentlemen. (NB: This guest list will be updated after further confirmations have been received)

The agreement is therefore: very significant. It continues to underscore the role of the City in public transport and black economic transformation in very innovative ways. Despite a tough and bumpy road, the primary environment at the discussions avoided confrontation and an impasse which may have easily led to conflict and instability. Our heartily congratulations to all those involved, and in particular, the negotiation teams from the Top Six Taxi Management, Putco and the City.

In May this year during my State of City Address, I announced sweeping changes to Johannesburg's urban landscape. These included the introduction of high-density residential development which is already underway within an area dubbed as new "Corridors of Freedom".

The approach is aimed dismantling the apartheid segregation concept in which the black majority of our residents were confined in townships far away from the heart of economic opportunities. Supporting the developments, we said, will be new transport arteries which will bring communities closer to work places, school and leisure.

Today's launch of Rea Vaya Phase 1B is therefore, a realisation of that announcement. It is one of the R100-billion infrastructure investment programme over ten years and represents a decisive move away from private vehicle use towards public transport, bicycle routes and pedestrian walkways.

The new bus services are being rolled out on the government's Transport Month (October) progressively until February 2014. Users of this service will be able to access some of the key public hospitals like Rahima Moosa, Helen Joseph and Charlotte Maxeke as well as private hospitals such as the Brenthurst and Parklane Clinic.

Educational institutions like University of Joburg (its Doornfontein, Bunting Road, Kingsway and Soweto campuses) Wits University, Milpark College, John Orr's College, Parktown Boys High School, Randpark High School, Helpmekaar Hoer School and National School of the Arts will also be accessed by users.

However the introduction of Rea Vaya BRT has become for the City far more than a public transport project. In fact at this time on economic downturn, it is becoming a significant contributor to job creation.

The Mayoral Committee took a deliberate decision to delay the procurement of buses to ensure that local content of buses could be maximised. Later this morning we will be visiting the Marco Polo bus building plant to witness the creation of local jobs and skills transfer in the bus manufacturing process.

We believe, Minister of Economic Development, that we have initiated and spurred a development to the expansion of local bus building and its component parts.

As we travelled here this morning, we passed 13 new stations that are now operating. Just less than 120 new staff members were employed by the City of Joburg to staff these stations – employees who were recruited either from the surrounding community or who previously worked in the taxi industry. For the majority of them, this is the first formal job opportunity. I congratulate all who were appointed.

When the bus operating company, which will be owned and managed by former affected operators from the taxi industry and PUTCO on the route, is fully operational, it will employ about 300 people – the majority of them drivers who we anticipate will be ex-taxi industry drivers.

We have invested R1.7 billion in the infrastructure for Phase 1B such as the roadways and stations but also including a new under pass between Newclare and Bosmont and three pedestrian bridges to improve pedestrian safety. During construction about 9 300 jobs were created and for each job that is created in construction, about another two are created elsewhere in South Africa such as in cement production.

We also believe that the Rea Vaya supports workers through its promise of safety, reliability and affordability. In July this year we introduced a smart card and from today we are introducing a 10% reduction in fares for off peak users between 9:00 and 15:00.

Over the next few months, we are also planning to introduce a number of fare products such as weeklies and monthly tickets and concessions fares for pensioners and students to increase the affordability of our buses.

Some improvements have been made to the buses and they include: self- operated lift for people with disabilities to enable them to easily get on and off the bus; flaps to close the gap when docking at the stations to improve safety; racks for storage of shoppers' handbags and parcels; fitted with heaters for use during cold winter days and camera to help the driver with docking and additional passenger safety.

At the bus stations, there are installed bike storage racks; provision of dustbins and seating near the stations to assist in reducing littering and keep the area clean as well as improved environment from beautiful landscaping and planting of indigenous trees.

The new bus routes will be an important support to Joburg's spatial master plan and campaign to transform entrenched apartheid settlement patterns and create a vibrant middle class environment where everyone can feel safe.

It will also enable us to achieve our vision of an integrated public transport system in Johannesburg, linking the Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit System, Metrorail and the Gautrain. This route, for example links directly to Park Station where passengers can transfer to Gautrain, Metrorail and other long distance modes.

The new urban design is strongly encouraging the move away from private car usage. So if you are stuck in the single lane remaining for private cars, park your car and hop on the bus!

Streets and sidewalks are being designed to facilitate the use of bicycles and safety measures are creating an amenable environment for pedestrians.

New high-rise residential development will be focused along the six priority corridors and put an end to urban sprawl in Johannesburg. An emphasis on the provision of rental accommodation opens up access for all communities, resulting in a spatially integrated and united City.

The multi-billion investment in infrastructure ensures the city's capacity to roll out new basic services to a growing population and help to maintain and upgrade existing infrastructure. Over R30-billion has been allocated for the infrastructure and the replacement of existing infrastructure as well as maintenance over the next three years.

These changes are bound to enable Johannesburg to compete with other cities on the African continent where seven out of ten of the world's fastest growing economies are located. The African financial services sector is projected to grow by 40% in the next seven years to 2020. Africa will spend 1.1 trillion US dollars (10.12-trillion rand) over the next 25 years to modernise infrastructure – and Johannesburg must lead this wave.

The City's initiatives to attract investments, business and residents to the inner city are increasingly showing results. The CBD is becoming a precinct where the emphasis is on mixed-use development with a growing demand for low-income rental housing. A five year capital investment plan is in place to innovative incentives offered to social housing developers.

Johannesburg citizens are not passive recipients of government services but in fact equal partners in the design and delivery of decisions that shape their future as shown in their active shaping of their future during the consultation of the 2030 Growth and Development Strategy (GDS).

Together with all stakeholders, the performance will be stepped up to further build improve on achievements of the past 20 years of democracy make residents, business, stakeholders and visitors be proud of the moulding the city into a World Class African City. To achieve this, more transit-orientated development and well planned transport arteries will continue to change traffic patterns, reduce travel times, reduce noxious carbon emissions and exhaust fumes, bring in a cleaner, healthier environment and improvements in the quality of life of the residents and visitors.

Finally, the City of Johannesburg is determined step up performance to make the past 20 years of democracy to be worthwhile for its residents, business, various stakeholders and visitors. As we approach the future, we all have more transit-orientated development and well planned transport arteries will continue to change traffic patterns, reduce travel times, reduce noxious carbon emissions and exhaust fumes, bringing in a cleaner, healthier environment and improvements in the quality of life of the residents and visitors.

I Thank You