

SPEAKER'S NOTES FOR CLR MPHOS PARKS TAU, EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF JOHANNESBURG AT THE LAUNCH OF THE Ndingilizi PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE

18 November 2013

We are today opening first public transport interchange in Johannesburg. It is fitting that this event takes place here in Soweto. This is where the transport industry plays such a decisive role in the lives of residents and in the economy of the region.

Premier of Gauteng Ms Nomvula Mokonyane; Member of the Mayoral Committee for Transport Ms Christine Walters; and Member of the Mayoral Committee for Finance, Mr Geoff Makhubo; Chairman of the Board of Pietermaritzburg Mr MK Mohlala; and chairperson of the Dobsonville, Roodepoort, Leratong, Johannesburg Taxi Association (Dorljota), Mr BV Shabangu; Members of the Mayoral Committee, the Media, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

This is a very important event for the City of Johannesburg. We are here to add another building block to our on-going efforts to improve public transport. This gathering also ensures that the facilities and infrastructure that are in place, contribute to a broader vision of equitable economic growth.

We call this vision, the “Corridors of Freedom”, because we are convinced that the ultimate economic and social transformation of Johannesburg, cannot take place without adequate and well-planned transport systems, accompanied by accelerated economic development.

Thus, we are following a transit-oriented approach where, public transport arteries – including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), commuter rail and taxi routes -- spread out across the city and provide the necessary linkages which connect communities and create a single, integrated Johannesburg.

Ladies and gentlemen,

“Ndingilizi” means a ‘circle’ and this, in many ways, is symbolic of the fact that we have come to a full circle, in the implementation of the City’s public transportation agenda. We regard the involvement of the taxi industry in this agenda, as a crucial success factor and we are delighted to have representatives from this sector with us today.

When we started with the deliberations about the Rea Vaya BRT in 2007, the City did encounter some opposition from within the taxi industry. Today, seven years later, we are launching the first integrated public transport interchange – and not in downtown Johannesburg, but in Soweto.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This public transport interchange, for the first time, combines a taxi rank with a bus terminus. The approach therefore provides a park-and-ride for private cars of our bus commuters.

You will recall that merely 12 months ago, this venue was an informal taxi rank. After the introduction of the BRT, we saw large numbers of people queuing here in the morning peak, to take a ride on the Rea Vaya complementary buses. Some commuters then started to park their cars here. This then quickly grew into informal park-and-ride.

The creative local taxi association, Dorljota, saw an opportunity to improve services to public transport users. They moved to put up a fence. During the process to get permission from the City, the idea of a more formal facility, was born.

I want to congratulate Dorljota for its far-sighted leadership and for partnering with the City to make this innovative facility a reality. I trust that this partnership will continue to endure and grow.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You will notice that we have created an innovative and quality interchange. This should serve as an example of the direction the City is taking in the provision of public transport infrastructure. We want to ensure that there is one standard for all modes and operators, that reflects our values and our commitments to customer care, public transport integration, low carbon economy, safer cities, job creation and economic empowerment.

For our customers and commuters, this facility means that they will no longer have to wait in the rain or hot sun to catch their transport. We now have offices for cashiers and customer care officials – for both Rea Vaya and the taxi industry – where passenger information will be provided, sale and loading of smart cards, complaints and passenger feedback will be addressed.

The most visible improvement will be in the area of public transport integration. Our “Corridors of Freedom” vision is one of seamless integration between buses, taxis, light passenger rail and systems such as the Gautrain.

In our future transport plans, the seamless integration will extend into ticketing. We are confident that the taxi industry will soon move in the direction of smart cards. This smart card can then also be used by passengers when they switch to other modes of transport such as buses and trains.

In the area of convenience for our customers, commuters from Bramfischerville can exchange at this terminus, to take the Rea Vaya bus to town. Dobsonville commuters can also safely park their cars right here and catch the Rea Vaya bus to their destinations.

Programme director,

It should be noted that this is the first Park-and-Ride facility that the City has invested in, in over 20 years, and the first of its kind in a township. This must be saying something about the changing nature of Soweto, and the impact of the City efforts to stimulate economic activity in the South.

An innovative concept flowing from this facility, is to promote shared parking -- or different uses of public space at different times. Thus, while this junction, with its bright red canopies, will be a park-and-ride facility during the day, it will also provide safe parking for mini bus taxis in the evenings and overnight.

I am especially proud of the fact that we have taken great care in the design and construction of this facility. The structure will provide a safe and well-lit environment for commuters, with no dark corners or hidden allies. This reflects the City’s commitment to the safety of our residents, and goes beyond the mere provision of policemen or JMPD officers.

During the construction, we attempted to make maximum use of local labour for training and employment. We remain committed to this approach during the operational phase by training, employing and contracting people from this area and from the local taxi association, Dorljota.

A report in this regard is being tabled before the Mayoral Committee at the end of the month. By offering these opportunities to the mini bus taxi industry, we are assisting members to transit into the formal economy and to diversify from taxi operations to other opportunities in the transport industry value chain.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to appeal to the leadership and members of Dorljota and the commuters, to support us in the upkeep of this facility. We should ensure that this area does not turn into a vehicle maintenance area or a car wash or a rubbish dump.

One of the features of this facility we are particularly proud of, is our utilisation of recycled materials in the construction. All the walls here are made from recyclable plastics. This reflects the City of Johannesburg's commitment to a low-carbon economy.

In February 2014, Johannesburg will be hosting the C40 Summit on Climate Change. I am exceptionally pleased that, we will be able to point to this project as an example of sustainability when the leaders of the world's largest cities meet in our city.

Programme director,

It gives me great pleasure to launch this facility today and to hand it over to PioTrans, Dorljota, the trader community and, most importantly, to commuters and community members with this request: 'handle with care'.

We want these facilities to remain beautiful, and to be a source of pride for the community. It is intended to make it easier for commuters to access public transport, but you should also take responsibility for its upkeep and maintenance.

Let us, together, commit to a crime-free environment, a user-friendly facility, and a zero tolerance approach to vandalism, illegal posters, the washing of mini bus taxis and all forms of pollution.

I want to congratulate and thank our partners in this project, and express the hope that this facility will grow in stature, become a flagship and model for Johannesburg and the rest of the country to aspire to and to replicate.

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