**Media Release**

**eThekwini Municipality Launches GO!Durban Cycle Academy in partnership with**

**Kargo PRO Cycling Team**

In an unprecedented move to support the growing need for increased mobility, connectivity and dignity for all citizens in the metropole, the eThekwini Municipality, today (February 11), launched the GO!Durban Cycle Academy in a public-private partnership with the Kargo PRO Cycling Team with support from the City’s Durban Green Corridor.

The inaugural intake of young cyclists from the eNanda area, where the first site for the Academy at eNanda Adventure Park is being developed, were introduced as well as the 2016 Kargo PRO Cycling Team: its riders, coaches, mentors and managers who have designed and will implement the Academy’s development strategy and operational programme to be used as the template for 7 other sites around the city.

The GO!Durban Cycle Academy provides an environment for local cycling training which also aims to bring young people together to meet, play and engage with each other using the sport of cycling as the common focus, whether it be for recreational, commuting or sporting purposes.

Importantly the Academy, which will focus on individual growth, is linked as an official feeder for professional cycling teams like the Kargo PRO Cycling Team, and provides a developmental opportunity for potential cycling talent.

The programme planned for Academy members will include requisite athletic training, but will also include important life skills-, mechanical- and technical training. The recruits will be required to sign a pledge to commit to the programme, adhere to a code of conduct, and will be expected to set a good example for their peers. Training will take place after school, and the young athletes will be required to complete their homework at the Academy site, as well as ensure their equipment and cycling kit is clean and maintained at all times.

The Durban Green Corridor has identified locations that have potential as Academy sites, and eight are confirmed in KwaMashu, KwaDabeka, eNanda, Cornubia, South Beach, Glenwood, Umlazi and Amanzimtoti.

In partnering with the Durban Green Corridor, GO!Durban is able to reach into local communities throughout eThekwini in a practical and sustainable way to promote recreational and commuter cycling for a healthy lifestyle and to reduce the transport related carbon footprint of the eThekwini population. The Durban Green Corridor is mandated to develop outdoor adventure sports and related tourism through natural open spaces in order to promote local economic development and job creation in the neighbouring communities, and as such makes a natural partner to develop cycle parks to support the development programme of the Academy, as well as providing safe spaces for citizens to learn to ride.

Put in context, the GO!Durban Cycle Academy forms the foundation for the creation of a robust cycling culture, as the City forges ahead with its planned GO!Durban integrated rapid public transport network. Intrinsically linked to this is the provision of walkways, pedestrian bridges and cycling lanes primarily as a means to provide access to public transport, but also to make provision for those, who, through circumstance, were unable to afford it.

It was out of this that the Non-Motorised Transport  (NMT) network plan was born, and the City’s engineers have an extensive plan to create cycle lanes and walkways throughout the urban and peri-urban sectors of the city as part of the overall public transport plan.

In 2014, as part of a plan to promote the NMT network at the Sustainable Living Expo, GO!Durban created a Believe Tree – a tree made from old bicycle parts, asking visitors to the expo to write their hopes and wishes for the future of the City, on a paper leaf and hang it on this tree. GO!Durban promised to plant a tree for every wish hung, to offset for the negative impact that infrastructure may have on the environment such as the tons of concrete and asphalt laid, or the need to remove trees to make way for roads. More than 2000 leaves “wishes” were hung, with most expressing a desire for safer, greener, more sustainable and liveable City.

On the back of these wishes, a Ride for Life concept arose which would lead to the creation of cycle parks, in which these trees could be planted, fulfilling the promise GO!Durban had made, and at the same time providing citizens with the space and opportunity to cycle and learn to cycle.

From this foundation and thinking arose the GO!Durban  Cycle Academy. “To this end a number of green environments will be re-configured for the homing of Academy facilities and riders, to fulfill that original promise and to fully realize the goal that the City takes sustainability, and importantly, takes the creation of a better life for all very seriously.”  said the Speaker Cllr Logie Naidoo speaking on behalf of His Worship the Mayor Cllr James Nxumalo.

“One of the important cogs towards building a successful Non Motorised Network, is having it adopted and used.  As we do not have a rigorous culture of cycling, the GO!Durban Cycle Academy development programme speaks directly to addressing this obvious gap. And that is why through our Ride for Life programme, eight such spaces are being created to home the Cycle Academy in a variety of communities to encourage people to cycle.”

“These pioneering young Academy cyclists herald a bright future for others that will come after them. As they are mentored, coached and nurtured with dignity and respect, they will learn skills that will hold them in great stead for their adulthoods.

But it is not only this. As with the ethos of GO!Durban, which aims to bring dignity and connectivity to all through mobility, the Academy also aims to provide connectivity for young people by linking them with a professional cycling team so that they are able to cross the historical barriers of the past, and have access to a world and environment that would ordinarily have been inaccessible.”

“If we are indeed to be Africa’s most caring and liveable city by 2030, we need to ensure that there is improved mobility for all, and that transport is an integral part of the economic and social functioning that will move us all forward socially and economically. This is what GO!Durban seeks to address.”

“As other cities around the world have experienced, the growth of a cycling culture impacts positively on communities as not only does it provide an affordable means of commuting, but it promotes a healthy lifestyle and contributes towards creating a more sustainable city.”

“From an empowerment point of view, it is hoped that the Academy will create employment opportunities as well as stimulate entrepreneurial economic growth within the areas where they are established, as people recognize the need for repair shops, eateries, training schools and attendant services related to cycling both from a commuter and recreational perspective.”

“The GO!Durban Academy promises to create an environment for entrepreneurship and the stimulation for small business growth. We urge the eNanda community to get involved, and not to watch from the sidelines. Look at this as an opportunity to develop a vibrant economic and socially satisfying node. At the same time, we encourage other communities where sites are planned to think how they can get involved.”

“We hope to, through this partnership, inspire young people to focus on achievable goals in their life, as we develop their self-confidence through sport, and in doing so develop in them a mind-set of success.” says Shaun Peschl, Manager of the Kargo PRO Cycling Team. “We believe that it is through development programmes such as this, that we can truly level the playing fields for those who have had many barriers to entry into the sport. The success of the partnership will be evident in how the children fare at school, at home and on the track as they develop their skills as young athletes. And we look forward to witnessing the entrepreneurial economic knock-on effect that these Academy sites will stimulate as the culture of cycling catches on.”

The Kargo PRO Cycling Team, as the inaugural partners in developing the GO!Durban Cycle Academy template and programme, have been gathering other partners and sponsors into the fold that will provide transport, nutritional and mechanical support, hardware and kit to help sustain the Academy.

The Mayor called on the private sector to “seize the opportunity to get on board now to be part of what promises to be a phenomenal social legacy, a potentially lucrative economic springboard for entrepreneurs, as well as new markets for formal business that will benefit in the long term from a developed culture of cycling in the city.”