**GO!Durban unveils unique Empowerment Charter**

“Dare to care” was the impassioned call from eThekwini Municipality Mayor Councillor James Nxumalo at the launch of the GO!Durban Empowerment Charter yesterday (Tuesday, October 21).

In a bold move for the transport sector, GO!Durban, the city’s integrated rapid public transport network (IRPTN), one of the largest infrastructure projects in South Africa, unveiled its unique Empowerment Charter after a day’s workshop with various stakeholders. The Empowerment Charter is not a preferencing policy, nor an embellishment of the BEE regulations, but is a series of additional specifications added by the GO!Durban project to all contracts awarded on the project. These additional clauses are targeted at addressing unemployment, poverty and inequality in the Metro.

The Mayor called on citizens in the spirit and context of empowerment, to “dare to care” not only about their individual needs, but the needs of those around them. “I ask you to lend a thought to the millions, that my station mandates that I serve, who are caught in between your needs and desires.  I ask you to care for them, and see beyond your needs and requirements to their needs and requirements and invite them to participate in the economy that you have created around yourself, your business or organisation.”

“In my mind ‘empowerment’ is the manner in which we give our citizens the tools to better themselves in a moral and accountable way,” said the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Nomvuzo Shabalala, who opened the proceedings. “The GO!Durban Empowerment Charter has been crafted to specifically address both the complexity of a new Public Transport System and to ensure that fair opportunity is given through several different platforms.”

“It is a given that the Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network, GO!Durban will transform the lives of eThekwini citizens through the development of nine transport ‘corridors’ across different types of transportation.” said the Mayor. “One of the essential provisos of the GO!Durban project has been to create a new Empowerment Charter specific to the multi-layered project, which has special clauses and strict criteria for all companies and service providers bidding for GO!Durban work. GO!Durban has tighter regulations and deliverables inserted into the tendering process and contract documents. We hope that the charter clarifies the process of empowerment and compels all service providers, contractors and subcontractors to follow strict guidelines and conditions or face clearly-specified penalties for non-compliance. The charter creation has taken into account empowerment landscape and seeks to redress the imbalances of the past. But the major difference is that this is Durban-focused, aimed at addressing local problems, ensuring that a dedicated portion of the spend on this project remains here.”

The Charter has created four key pillars around which regulatory and empowerment laws are used to ensure that procurement protocols are more effective and achieve the intended target. The four “pillars” that underpin the GO!Durban Empowerment ethos are Equity, Enterprise Development, Skills Development, Socio Economic Development/CSI. Each pillar has been crafted to address the realities of the requirements of the complex project roll out that will affect the GO!Durban project until 2027, so the Charter affects communities and industry now, into the future and beyond.

 “The government clearly identifies the desire and need to bring about change and transformation in the fabric of our society work and community involvement.” said the Mayor.  “The correct use of Empowerment Charters in large contracts such as GO!Durban will not only drive the country and this province into a new era of economic prosperity, but lay the foundation for future opinion makers, business leaders and companies to take up the call to “dare” to bring about effective transformation of a nation.”

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**NOTE TO EDITORS: The Targets and progress of each of the Empowerment “Pillars”:**

**Equity**

In terms of the Equity, Management and Control pillar, the target was to contract local firms with head offices in Durban, with a 40% BEE target comprised of 32% PBE (Priority Business Enterprise) and 8% BBE (Black Business Enterprise), withother industry specific targets set in consultation with experts in the field. Therehas been100% Compliance achieved in all 5 construction contracts appointed to date. This equates to R1 billion  of which  R800m went to Black African owned companies.

**Skills Development**

The target here is that each contract will provide a 3 year qualification related experience to 5 unemployed graduates and 5 bursaries with the emphasis on the development of core, scarce and critical skills. In terms of progress here a skills development strategy and implementation plan is being developed; a skills database has been designed and is in the process of being populated, industries to be targeted for bursaries and unemployed graduates have been identified and funds for 25 bursaries and 25 unemployed graduates have already been reserved.

**Enterprise Development**

Thirty percent(30%) of total contract value has to be subcontracted to local businesses (10%) and to businesses (20%) within eThekwini. To date local business participation has been established and a database of local businesses is being created.

The target for each contract is 100% local unskilled labour during construction and semi- and skilled labour will also be sourced from local communities. To date 362 jobs have been created of which 62 are women, 127 youth and 4 physically challenged.

**Socio-Economic Development / CSI**

Contractors and service providers must provide 0.2% of contract value towards a CSI / socio-economic development. The CSI programme is being packaged with the Contributing  Contractors. This Fund will support - Sport, Arts and Academics. Candidate identification and selection process is in place. The CSI programme and funds will be managed by a dedicated resource. The eThekwini Municipality will convene an Empowerment Charter Board which will be responsible for the administration, management and compliance monitoring of the implementation of the charter. The Empowerment Charter Board is supported by the GO!Durban Programme Management Office, which will carry out the day to day duties of the board.