

Media Release

Non-Motorised Transport Programme rolls out alongside GO!Durban

“This is a City for People not a City for Cars”, was the message given by His Worship the Mayor of the eThekweni Municipality, Councillor James Nxumalo, echoing the vision of the City of Curitiba, Brazil, at the launch of the City’s Non-Motorised Transport Network today at the Green Hub in Durban. He reaffirmed the City’s “commitment for the development of public transport infrastructure plans to harness people power to propel themselves forward.”

Most cities in the world that have improved their transportation infrastructure by creating sustainable integrated rapid public transport networks have included a Non-Motorised Transport component. This includes all means of transport that are “human powered” like walking, and cycling, and variants such as roller skates, skateboards, push scooters and hand carts, as well as wheelchair travel, but also includes “animal powered” such as horse and carriage drawn transport.

“Our situation however in South Africa differs from the other NMT’s in that it includes the provision of safe, manageable and accessible lanes and routes for citizens to reach public transport infrastructure.” said Councillor Nxumalo.

The City’s vibrant dedicated infrastructural plan for the NMT network will include sidewalks, off-road paths, safe crossings, pedestrian bridges and cycle areas, for recreational and commuting purposes. The focus, however, will be on commuter-based use, that enables and empowers people to walk and cycle throughout the city, and are designed to help protect them from fatalities caused by motorised vehicles or negotiating unsafe pathways to access the public transport network.

“The full potential of NMT networks is often lost in the focus on the recreational and environmental benefits,” said Nxumalo “But we believe that the City’s NMT is a basic infrastructural right for all our citizens. There are some people living in our City that are unable to access public transport safely because of the lack of this basic infrastructure and today we celebrate the beginnings of the roll out of this plan through GO!Durban, our Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network.”

The vision of the NMT is to have a safe, functional and attractive environment for NMT users that gives all its people good access to opportunities, and improved quality of life, stimulates economic growth and creates a sustainable city for the future.

The success of the NMT will be judged on how it delivers on four pillars: its ability to **connect** people to places and communities, how it **enhances** lifestyles and results in an environment that is safer, how it **promotes** economic growth and prosperity and whether it is **delivered** in an efficient and sustainable way.

Large sections of eThekweni’s population are dependent on walking and cycling, and as such the City must ensure that the needs of this sector are met in terms of their transport requirements.

Walking is the most dominant mode for travel to places of education and work, and longer distance walking is dominant in low-income households.

In 2006, the eThekweni Transport Authority (ETA) produced several ideas for a Cycle Policy for the City, which formulated a strategy addressing the following priority areas: commuting, recreation, tourism, sport, special events, and scholars. Building on this foundation, GO!Durban, the City's IRPTN, will implement a planned programme of cycle projects to ensure the new network provides for the needs of non-motorised transport users, primarily taking into account the needs of those who will require cheaper commuting options such as walking and cycling.

Part of the NMT's foundation was also developed in the years leading up to the Soccer World Cup in 2010 with the massive upgrade of the beachfront. The idea of "connecting" people and communities that was created by the City for this international event included walkway routes such as the Green Walk Cycle Circuit, Walk all the Way System and Connect to Rail and these will be expanded upon through the new IRPTN.

Further investment in infrastructure kickstarted by COP17 in 2011, enabled the City to develop routes that connect cycling and pedestrian lanes along the beachfront promenade from uShaka to the uMngeni River Bird Park. This included the widening of the M4 bridge over the uMngeni and these lanes will gradually be extended to link up to Burman Bush, Botanic Gardens and Bulwer Park. The City has also mapped out a number of "spines" to link the ICC and Durban beachfront to the Botanic Gardens and Wilson's Wharf.

"For the achievement of the initial phase of the NMT, the City is indebted to the generosity of KfW Entwicklungsbank which provided seed money to implement part of the NMT plan ahead of COP17," said the Mayor. "We would like to urge potential partners and businesses to assist and support us in our aims in the inner city and in the rural areas to develop and grow the use of the NMT's through cycling and walking."

"We are committed to providing lanes for commuter cyclists and walkers beyond the tourist precinct that has already been developed. We will be creating NMT networks across the City that will include Umlazi, KwaMashu, Chatsworth, Inanda, KwaXimba, uMbumbulu and Buffelsdraai. The long term goal is that as these intracity mini networks grow they will exponentially connect the various areas of the City."

In the main non-motorised transport modes are healthy, non-polluting, versatile and reliable. As a City that benefits from excellent weather year round, the impact of the dedicated cycle and pedestrian areas built in and around Durban's beachfront, uMhlanga promenade and the Suncoast promenade as well as the Moses Mabhida Stadium area, has seen the rise of bicycle users both professionally and recreationally.

"Cycling is recognized as the most prolific growing sport on a semiprofessional level with many cyclists taking part in dedicated mountain bike and road bike events and races, and it is vital that we as a City help to support this mode of transport."

Demonstrating the City's commitment to developing cycling and encouraging the use of the NMT, Nolan Hoffman, captain of Team Abantu, South Africa's most prolific cycle race winner, who currently ranks fifth in the world, cycle along the promenade with together with youngsters Lebo Pebane and William Mokgopo from the Diepsloot Mountain Bike Academy, a development NGO in Johannesburg, escorted the Mayor on a bicycle ride to the launch with roller bladers, rickshaws, skateboarders and walkers from the beachfront promenade to the Green Hub.

The Diepsloot Mountain Bike Academy, is a development and youth empowerment programme in Johannesburg which provides underprivileged children with opportunities to participate in recreational and competitive sporting activities, to enhance their sense of self-belief and self respect. The programme contributes to the social upliftment of the Diepsloot community by seeking out and developing youth in the community who, it is hoped, will become agents of change and lead through example.

"We believe that it is this kind of programme, which has had incredible success that will work extremely well for our youth in the City. Through this programme William Mokgopo has been fast-tracked into the professional Kargo MTB team and Lebo Pebane represented South Africa at the All Africa Games as well as the Youth Olympics. We are hoping that similar such NGOs will be emulated here in the City, and we will be looking for partnerships for similar development programmes in the City. I would like to personally sow the seeds in the hearts of our citizens and potential funders to look for ways this can be done."

The City will launch a bike share system for municipal staff, which serves as a pilot project of how to encourage the use of bikes, as well as draw key learnings on how to build sustainable business for entrepreneurs through it. It is hoped that the NMT will create opportunities for small businesses by private citizens to set up supporting businesses such as cycle maintenance outlets, cleaning or storage stations along the way both informally and formally such as the Bike and Bean on the beachfront. This will dovetail into the NMT plan for GO!Durban titled "First Mile and Last Mile" which looks at how the NMT will link to the motorised network.

"Ultimately, providing a sustainable NMT system is part of our service delivery for future generations. We want to create a system that is viable for our children and grandchildren, providing a legacy that remains long after we have gone," said the Mayor.

This sustainability theme runs as a vital thread through the GO!Durban programme, as it will develop green zones along with this NMT network. But from the obvious and many health aspects of mobilizing and encouraging people of all ages to walk and cycle, there are plans for "City Cycle" or "Ride to Work" events that encourage people to leave their cars at home, which will have a significant impact on carbon emissions and traffic pollution. Increased mobility and accessibility have a significant economic impact on an individual who needs less money to commute or maintain and fill a car with fuel.

"Through GO!Durban we will continue our endeavours to empower our youth and future generations, not only with a City that creates economic opportunity and prosperity, but also

strives to create a healthier lifestyle for all. It is time that Durbanites take back the streets.” said the Mayor.

For further information on GO!Durban and the NMT go to www.godurban.co.za. Follow on Facebook or Twitter GO_Durban.

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Note to editors:

- Curitiba, Colombia has a bus system that is so efficient that car traffic decreased by 30% while the population trebled in a twenty year period.
- Curitiba has the largest downtown pedestrianised shopping area in the World.