

Velo Mondial Conference
Address by the MEC for Transport & Public Works
Mr Marius Fransman

6th February 2006

It is indeed my great pleasure to be here today to celebrate with you the first International Velo Mondial Conference to be held in the Southern Hemisphere and in Africa.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all conference participants on behalf of the Provincial Government of the Western Cape and I trust that you will feel very welcome in our beautiful city of Cape Town.

Next Saturday many of you will experience one of the largest and best organized cycle races in the world. Over 32000 cyclists will participate in the Argus Two Oceans cycling tour which winds through dramatic scenery between the mountains and the oceans over a distance of 109 km. But as you look out of your hotel windows during this conference you will hardly see a cyclist. In fact it is very rare for South Africans to use bicycles functionally to get to and from work. In South Africa cycling is predominantly a white middle-class leisure activity.

You might be wondering why this is so. One reason is the legacy of Apartheid spatial planning. Under Apartheid black people were forced to live in townships anything upwards of 20km from their places of

work. You will agree with me that this is not conducive to using bicycles as a means of transport to and from work.

But we are in the process of turning the legacy of Apartheid around. Last year our government launched a national growth plan known as the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) which aims for a 6% growth in GNP p.a. by the year 2010. In his State of the Nation address last month, President Mbeki spoke of the dawn of an 'Age of Hope' and our Premier, Ebrahim Rasool has indicated in his State of the Province address that in the Western Cape we are on the threshold of prosperity.

The Western Cape's growth and development strategy, '**iKapa Elihlumayo**' aims at creating a ***World Class Province which cares for all its people, underpinned by a vibrant, growing and sustainable economy.***

However, to achieve shared growth and a province that cares for all its people will require some critical decisions and a careful prioritizing of our various interventions. An important element is the expansion and maintenance of infrastructure which will ensure social integration and environmental sustainability.

Socio-economic development in the Western Cape is also guided by the Provincial Spatial Development Framework. This framework requires that every municipality develop plans for fully integrated human settlements as well as Non-Motorized Transport (NMT) plans which include pedestrian and cycle path networks. The Provincial

government will also be introducing a draft NMT policy which should be ready for adoption by Cabinet in August of this year.

During the past 3 years substantial funding has been made available to municipalities for the construction of public transport infrastructure. R32 million has already been spent on the construction and upgrading of NMT in both the City of Cape Town and the district municipalities throughout the province.

According to the 2003 National Household Transport Survey, roughly 1.6 million daily trips to work are made in the province as a whole. NMT accounts for 58% of all trips in the rural Karoo and 8% in Cape Town. It is therefore vital that a multi-faceted NMT strategy be implemented in the city and also in the rural areas to achieve the goal of sustainable mobility and energy efficient forms of transport. In the context of rising fuel prices, low cost and affordable transport will be vital link to achieving long term prosperity for all in the Province.

In order to determine the extent to which NMT can contribute to economic growth, an attitudinal survey was carried out in 2004, mostly in district municipalities. The findings revealed that in deep rural areas 23% of the sample population did not use NMT as their destinations were too far. Weather conditions were also cited by further 23% as a reason for not using NMT. The majority of the respondents in the rural areas said that bicycles were too expensive. In the city the main reason given for the non-use of NMT was the lack of suitable cycle paths.

A culture of cycling has not been nurtured and it has not been a planning requirement in the past. Nor have the many benefits of cycling been fully realized yet. There is however, potential for rapid growth in the use of bicycles especially in rural areas – for example, cycling to school, businesses making deliveries and women doing their daily shopping and other chores. In the context of rising fuel prices, these activities would contribute to a sustainable growth path.

It is with this approach to sustainable mobility in mind, that our province has introduced many initiatives to remedy the imbalances of the past.

Women in cycling programme.

Communities need to appreciate the health and economic benefits of improved mobility and access to goods and services. Women have been historically disadvantaged in many ways and bicycles can be an important catalyst to place gender issues on the transport agenda. The immobility of women, especially in rural areas, can be transformed by the use of bicycles, and to this end my department has established a woman cycling programme and I intend to focus on this issue during this year.

Car free days

As part of my department's promotion of the various mobility strategies, two car free days were held during October last year. Parts of the City and the CBD of a rural town, Oudtshoorn, were

completely closed off to allow pedestrians and cyclists freedom of the roads.

Non motorized infrastructure

My department has already spent 28 million to upgrade the NMT infrastructure along the Klipfontein corridor, which extends from the Central Business District along the Klipfontein Road to Khayelitsha and encompasses approximately a third of Cape Town's transport infrastructure. Dignified urban spaces will do much to improve the overall quality of life in the communities along this corridor.

Oudtshoorn to Cango Caves cycle and pedestrian path project.

This project was initiated in 2003 and the conceptual planning and detailed design will be completed in this financial year. Phase 1 consists of a 14 km pedestrian/cycle path which stretches from the CBD, past the informal settlements to many of the tourist destinations. Phase 2 will be the link from the 14 km endpoint, through the Swartberg path to the Cango caves.

My hope is that this Velo Mondial conference will highlight the bicycle as a key link in a sustainable transport chain, and the important role that bicycles can play in the socio-economic development of the province. Cycling should not remain simply a leisure activity of middle-class whites – it should claim its proper place as an environmentally sound means of transport which has the potential to uplift our poorer communities. But there is a huge challenge here

because for cycling to become a preferred means of transport for the poor, we also need to reverse the effects of the racially segregated planning of the past towards integrated human settlements where people can live and work in decent environments.

The Provincial Government supports this conference's emphasis on economic prosperity and it is my hope that your deliberations will result in suggestions and proposals for taking this province beyond the 'threshold of prosperity' .