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MEC Mhlahlo to host Eastern Cape rural roads summit

Eastern Cape MEC for Safety, Liaison, Roads and Transport Mr Thobile Mhlahlo, today announced that the Department of Roads and Transport will host a provincial rural roads summit on 4 to 5 June 2008 at Qunu.

MEC Mhlahlo was addressing Trans MEC, which is a structure that he established to provide a platform for interaction between the Department of Roads and Transport, municipalities and transport sector role players within the province.

The summit will be attended by all stakeholders involved in the construction and maintenance of road infrastructure, including other transport sector role players, district and local municipalities.

The purpose of the summit is for the Department of Roads and Transport to realise its commitment, which was highlighted in the Policy Speech by MEC Mhlahlo in March 2007, of changing the ratio of surface to gravel roads, with 80 percent of the 43 465 kilometres (km) provincial network to surface and 20 percent to remain gravel. Presently, 5 102 km are surfaced and 38 363 km are gravel.

The department further wants to present its priorities for the next ten years.

The objectives of the summit are the following:

- to highlight provincial infrastructure challenges and best possible strategies to improve the quality of the Eastern Cape rural roads
- to promote the use of alternative technologies due to the scarcity of quarry material
- to promote strategic initiatives that will give expression to labour intensive methods of road construction and maintenance in line with the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) principles
- to bring all the relevant role players on board about Government's agenda for the reconstruction and development of the provincial infrastructure
- to build partnership with local government
- to promote skills development.

"Accelerated infrastructure development in pursuit of economic and social goals has been identified as one of government's Apex Priorities, which we all have to respond to. The Provincial Growth and Development Plan and the Accelerated Growth Initiative for South Africa further highlight the importance of road infrastructure investment to both

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change the face of the Eastern Cape and to fight poverty through creation of community-based road construction and maintenance programmes," said MEC Mhlahlo.

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