

# Minister Dipuo Peters opens Umngeni Interchange during Transport Month

Major boost for traffic flow and road safety as Transport Minister opens Umngeni Interchange.



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The Minister of Transport, Dipuo Peters together with KwaZulu-Natal Premier Honourable Senzo Mchunu, the MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison Willie Mchunu and the Mayor of eThekweni Councillor James Nxumalo invite members of the media to the official opening of the completed Umngeni Interchange in Durban as part of the October Transport Month (OTM) campaign.

The official opening of this world class infrastructure made possible by a solid collaboration between the Department of Transport, South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL) and the Municipality of eThekweni will take place on Tuesday, 20 October from 9am. OTM is aimed at showcasing infrastructure projects with major socio-economic spin-offs in all modes of transport namely roads, aviation, maritime, rail and public transport.

Later during the course of the morning, the minister will interact with members of the community from Umngeni and surrounding areas to report back on the successes achieved and progress made in the transport sector but also challenges encountered in the process and issues that might be raised by the community. The South African National Roads Agency (SOC) Limited (SANRAL) is a state-owned entity falling under the oversight of the National Department of Transport. Its distinct mandate is to finance, improve, manage and maintain the national road network.

Apart from improving roads infrastructure, SANRAL is also contributing to economic empowerment and poverty alleviation by ensuring that small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) are exposed to work experiences that would otherwise not have been possible. Millions of rands have been paid to SMMEs working on the KZN projects.

## Improvements to the Umngeni road interchange on the N2

The Umngeni Road Interchange is located on the N2 and falls within the eThekweni Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal.

Prior to the upgrade of the interchange, about 20,000 vehicles were travelling through per hour during morning and evening peak hours. Light vehicles constituted 94% of the traffic while heavy vehicles constituted 6% of the traffic. The original was a conventional diamond interchange where traffic on the ramps was controlled by traffic lights. There was chronic congestion at the intersection.

The need for this project was identified by traffic studies conducted in 2003. It became apparent that the construction of an improved intersection would reduce congestion and improve road safety at the interchange. The project was initiated as part of the upgrade programme of the Durban Outer Ring Road and has been jointly funded by SANRAL and the Municipality of eThekweni.

SANRAL awarded the consulting engineering services for this project in October 2009 and contracting services in December 2010. Construction started in March 2011 and was completed in July 2015. A total budget of R512 million was used for the project.

The project included the construction of two incrementally launched, "free flow" interchange consisting of directional ramp bridges; a free flow loop ramp and three cast in-situ bridges; two pedestrian bridges and pedestrian facilities around the interchange. During the construction period, 404 people including site staff were employed at a total cost of R56 million. Additionally, 17 Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMME) subcontractors were employed at a total spend of R55 million.

The beginning of June 2015 ushered a momentous period when the first new ramps at the Umngeni Interchange on the N2 were opened to motorists. Of particular public interest was the eye-catching longest and highest ramp which enables traffic from the N2 North to branch off eastwards towards the Durban CBD.

The improvements at the Interchange have resulted in reduced journey times with a substantial reduction in traffic queues, reduction in traffic congestion on the N2 and M19 during peak hours, improved safety for pedestrians and motorists as well as accident reduction, particularly on the N2 between the EB Cloete and Umngeni Interchanges.

## **Award winning project**

Even before being fully operational, the Umngeni Interchange bagged two prestigious awards. In recognition of excellence in civil engineering, the Concrete Society of Southern Africa chose the Umngeni Road interchange as the winner of the Fulton Award in the category for civil engineering structures over R100 million in value.

The South African Institution of Civil Engineering (SAICE) conferred the Award for Technical Excellence on the Umngeni Interchange project. This award is given to a project that has unique or unusual features and should demonstrate some notable advance in the solution of engineering problems. It should have particular aesthetic appeal and should display engineering ingenuity in analysis or design and/or in construction technique.

KwaZulu-Natal motorists are already enjoying the benefits of the newly opened interchange. Feedback on the ground has been positive in that motorists are generally pleased to have direct access through the interchange to various destinations, especially to their places of work.

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