



GAUTENG PROVINCE

ROADS AND TRANSPORT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SPEECH

Speech at the Opening of N1/N12 Misgund Interchange

30 January 2013

Honourable Minister Ben Martins

Deputy Minister Cindy Chikunga

Councillors from the City of Johannesburg

Director-General of the National Department of Transport, Mr George

Mahlalela

SANRAL CEO, Mr Nazir Alli

Ladies and Gentleman

I am absolutely delighted to be part of a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the upgrading of N1/N12 Misgund Interchange. Living as I do in Lenasia, I have travelled on this freeway ever since it was first constructed. Not once did I imagine that I would be party to an official event to open an upgraded portion of a national freeway. For this privilege, I'd like to sincerely thank the Minister of Transport and SANRAL. I am humbled and I feel honoured to be a participant in this memorable occasion. I can say without hesitation, that every time I shall pass this way, I will remember this moment.

This R180 million freeway upgrade entailed the widening to three lanes of the notorious "death bend", which has claimed hundreds of lives over the past few years, forcing road traffic authorities in the past to declare it an 80km speed zone.

Also, the N1 freeway from the Golden Highway up to the N12 interchange has been widened into four lanes and a new layer of asphalt has been rolled out on the old concrete highway. The upgraded section includes new road lighting and enhanced traffic safety features.

A few things stand out in the upgrading of this Interchange. Firstly, it has considerably eased traffic congestion for thousands of motorists who daily use this freeway either going to work or when they are returning

home. If we travelled this way during peak hours, we would spend at least 15-20 minutes getting through the congestion at this interchange. And if there was an accident on this road, then we would be waiting for an hour or more. That is a thing of the past now and traffic has been flowing smoothly since last December when the additional lanes were opened.

Secondly, it has improved road safety considerably. The investment of R180 million in upgrading this Interchange is an important contribution to the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety, which has as one of its objectives the improvement of road infrastructure to prevent road crashes and fatalities. This is not commonly called the “death bend” for no reason at all. Over the years hundreds of motorists have lost their lives on these dangerous bends. The road is much safer now!

Thirdly, I am eternally grateful that this portion of the upgrade is not earmarked for tolling. So, it is not going to pinch pockets of road users. In fact, with the easing of traffic flow, motorists are likely to save a small fortune over time, because they would not have “to-stop-and-go” during peak hours.

Fourthly, this project is a good example of co-operative governance in action. All three spheres of government have worked together to ensure that the project is successfully completed. The project was carried out by residents from the local community over a 15 month period. It has created employment over this period for 179 local residents and involved a dozen SMMEs in sub-contracting activities.

Lastly, many of us who use this freeway regularly do not realise its strategic importance and the critical linkages it offers to motorists nationally. This Misgund Interchange connects Gauteng to the Free State; and onward to the Western Cape. It also links Gauteng to the North West Province and to Mpumalanga, if we are travelling eastward. Take this Interchange away, and you are cut off from large parts of the country. For all these reasons, we would like to thank SANRAL for taking the initiative in upgrading this portion of the freeway and for successfully completing the project.

Honourable Minister, we dearly value our relationship with your esteemed office; with the National Department of Transport; and with SANRAL. For us it is not just another relationship, but rather a strategic partnership. This is most visible in the range of projects we are working

on together. Together with the Department and SANRAL, we have upgraded:

- the M1 from Buccleuch Interchange to Corlett Drive;
- the portion of the freeway from Potgieter Street in Pretoria up to the Brakfontein Interchange on the N14; and
- we have carried out extensive sinkhole repairs and road construction work between Krugersdorp and Ventersdorp and in Centurion.

We are also collaborating with SANRAL and the Johannesburg Roads Agency on upgrading the road network around the City Deep Freight/Logistics Hub in central Johannesburg. We are bonded together on the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project. And then there is this project.

Minister Martins, yesterday I had a meeting with the Chief Whip of the City of Johannesburg, Councillor Prema Naidoo, and by chance the topic of this road came up. He simply said, "It's a pleasure to drive on this road!" Nothing could capture it better and for this we'd like to thank your Department and SANRAL.

Ismail Vadi
Gauteng MEC for Roads and Transport