



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE

Department of Roads & Transport



MEDIA RELEASE

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AIR LINK PLANS TO FLY TO BHISHO AIRPORT AND INCREASE FLIGHTS TO MTHATHA AIRPORT

Bhisho Airport is expected have the first commercial airline landing in the near future.

This follows a meeting held last week at Bhisho Airport between the Department of Roads and Transport and Air Link on the possibility of introducing flights between Cape Town, Bhisho Airport and Mthatha.

The Department's delegation was led by the MEC for Transport and Safety Ms Gloria Barry, who expressed appreciation by this show of interest.

Air Link Chief Operations Officer Johan van Jaarsveld said the newly-refurbished Bhisho Airport infrastructure met their requirements. "There is a huge opportunity for us here and any Air Link aircraft can land here. We will send an operations team to do an audit of operational facilities," said van Jaarsveld.

The company further requested the Department to urgently upgrade its infrastructure at the Mthatha Airport in order to introduce an evening flight between Johannesburg and Mthatha.

It was agreed that, while waiting for the physical upgrade to commence at the Mthatha Airport by July 2009, the runway lights needed urgent attention.

This initiative forms part of the Department's Blue Skyway Aviation Strategy, which seeks to attract investment to the Bhisho and Mthatha Airports. The Department intends to:

- Have a second airline between Mthatha and Johannesburg, including an evening flight. A future link to Durban from Mthatha is envisaged as soon as the correct type of service is developed. An important goal is to link Port Elizabeth to Mthatha via Bhisho with the service geared for faster movement between these three areas and to reduce the number of government vehicles on these routes.
- Ensure that Mthatha Airport contributes in tourism development in the region through improving access to the Wild Coast, which is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.
- Ensure that the Airport contributes to local business development
- Facilitate connectivity with local businesses as people will now come directly to Mthatha instead of flying to East London and then drive for 3 hours.

“Our doors are wide open for any investor that wants to come forward and add value in this project,” said MEC Barry.

Issued by the Eastern Cape Department of Roads and Transport

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