MEDIA RELEASE

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MINISTER JEFF RADEBE TO ATTEND THE EC RURAL ROADS SUMMIT

Transport Minister Jeff Radebe will attend the Eastern Cape Rural Roads Summit to be held at the Qunu Youth and Heritage Centre from 06 – 08 August 2008.

This was confirmed by his office today that Minister Radebe will deliver the keynote address at official opening of the summit alongside MEC for Safety, Liaison, Roads and Transport, Mr Thobile Mhlahlo in the morning of 07 August 2008.

The first day of the summit will be dedicated to the suppliers of alternative surfacing technology, where they will get an opportunity to present their products to stakeholders involved in construction and maintenance of road infrastructure.

More than 20 companies have confirmed their participation in the exhibition during the summit.

The summit aims to:

- Highlight provincial infrastructure challenges and formulate the best possible strategies for the improvement of the quality of Eastern Cape roads
- Promote the use of alternative technologies to mitigate the scarcity of quarry material
- Promote strategic initiatives that will give expression to labour-intensive methods of road construction and maintenance
- Garner support from the relevant role player regarding the government's agenda for the reconstruction and development of the provincial infrastructure
- Build partnerships with Local Government
- Promote skills development

The Department of Roads and Transport is also expected to present its priorities for the next ten year for stakeholders’ comments.

The Department is in the process of surfacing 80% of the province's 43 465 km road network. Currently, only 5 102 kilometres of the province’s road network is surfaced. The Rural Roads Summit aims to speed up this process.

"The surfacing of the province's roads will accelerate service delivery," said MEC for Transport Mr Thobile Mhlahlo, "As well as afford communities much needed mobility and closing the gap between the so-called 'first' and 'second' economies."

“We've identified road infrastructure as one sector with the ability to completely change the face of the Eastern Cape,” continues Mr Mhlahlo. “Besides the obvious benefits of a sound infrastructure, the creation of community-based road construction and maintenance programmes could create jobs and alleviate poverty on an exciting scale.”

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