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KZN MEC FOR FINANCE, FRANCOIS RODGERS, INTERVENES ON TRUCKING CONGESTION AT UMBILO WHICH IS DISINCENTIVISING INVESTMENT AND THREATENS LOCAL BUSINESS OPERATIONS

KwaZulu-Natal's Finance MEC, Hon. Francois Rodgers, has undertaken to escalate calls for relief on Umbilo's Sydney Road in eThekweni amid worsening truck congestion near the port precinct as this is threatening local business operations and disincentivising investment in the area.

On Friday, MEC Rodgers met with the Umbilo Business Association (UBA) which was represented by its chairperson Doran Subiah, policy director Ian Campbell-Gillies, legal advisor and policy strategist Nontokozo Mpanza-Seme, publicity and marketing head Jeremy Williams and community liaison officer Cllr. Mthembiseni Thusi.

The UBA is a voluntary business association that was formed in 2010. Its membership is comprised of business owners operating in Umbilo, Glenwood and the Berea areas of eThekweni.

Over the years, the organisation established various community and outreach projects aimed at empowering destitute residents from nearby hostels and informal settlements.

On Friday, the UBA appraised MEC Rodgers on its ambitious public-private partnership proposal which is focused on revitalising the Umbilo business precinct for a thriving entrepreneurial and residential community.

"The UBA precinct area is the third largest contributor to the GDP of eThekweni, but unfortunately investment into the local infrastructure has been wanting over the years," said Subiah.

The UBA's proposal which emanates from a recently concluded logistics study is focused on preserving the local road infrastructure, recovery of the economic viability of Umbilo, crime reduction and establishing a private-public partnership to safeguard local business and community activities.

The report titled '*Logistics Study for the Proposed Alan Paton Road Truck Staging Area in Umbilo*' states:

"It appears that the manner in which businesses have developed in the Sydney Road area has been directed, unexpectedly, by clustering market forces resulting in the concentration of large logistics operations... The result is that Sydney Road is almost unrecognisable from its appearance ten years ago".

"The sectoral direction of development shows little sign of abating, despite the fact that the road infrastructure is inadequate to be able to deal with the current demands being made on it".

The UBA pointed out that the number of trucks, many of them superlinks or tri-axles, which enter the area daily cannot be unloaded or loaded quickly enough at the receiving sites to prevent illegal parking along Sydney road or in some streets.

MEC Rodgers commended the UBA for various community projects which include the revitalisation of the Congella Park, the establishment of community gardens for the benefit of previously unemployed residents and establishment of some parking facilities for trucks.

The MEC said:



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“From a government perspective, it appears that the proposed public-private partnership will be a unique opportunity to revitalise the Umbilo area. This will ultimately create jobs and stimulate investment as well as ensure that the area is thriving”.

MEC Rodgers undertook to discuss the proposal within government structures in a bid to secure the UBA the assistance that it requires.

Reflecting on the meeting with the MEC, the UBA’s Doran Subiah said: “The meeting was most encouraging and positive for our precinct. There was a distinct synergy in our approaches to the solutions that will alleviate the challenges we face and ensure sustainable economic growth”.

Subiah added: “With the advent of the GPU, it bodes well that we finally will get traction on ensuring that our precinct gets the support we need and finally put into action the plans to stimulate our local economy, encouraging businesses to return and others to expand, to alleviate poverty, eradicate crime and all this within the auspices of Ubuntu”.

Issued by KZN Treasury. For clarity, contact Spokesperson and Media Liaison Officer, Nkosikhona Duma on 071 383 0388 or Director for Corporate Communication, Musa Cebisa on 071 6878 777.