

PRESS RELEASE

Johannesburg's central business district Sandton leads towards an ecomobile urban future

[Johannesburg - 5 OCTOBER 2015] The EcoMobility World Festival 2015 kicked off yesterday in Johannesburg.

In a bold approach to change urban mobility patterns, the City of Johannesburg, South Africa, is giving their citizens a preview of a future urban transport system where walking, cycling and public transport become the preferred transport modes of choice. During the month-long EcoMobility World Festival, which kicked off on Sunday, street in the Sandton Central Business District (CBD) have been turned into public spaces where people can move with ecomobile means of transport: pedestrians, cyclists and public transport are being given priority. The area has been partially closed to cars, while new bicycle lanes, a public transport loop around the CBD and a park and ride system offer alternatives to residents and commuters.

Sandton is Africa's economic hub, referred to as Africa's richest square mile. While many cities in the world are struggling to reduce traffic, it's for the first time that a CBD is converted into an ecomobile zone for an entire month. 75,000 cars enter Sandton every morning and leave every evening.

"With more office, hotel and shopping capacity being built, Sandton will become a huge parking lot", says Executive Mayor Parks Tau. "Ever-worsening congestion will hurt the county's economy. EcoMobility forms a key part of the city's action on climate change, air pollution and social inequalities".

This forward-thinking and courageous initiative by the City of Johannesburg, rolled out in the format of a festival, has received strong support from the provincial and national governments.

"The EcoMobility Festival is the moment to showcase alternative modes of transport. Social integration and social cohesion are at the center of that. We need to build our cities and human settlements in a way that it easily promotes people interacting, walking and cycling", said David Makhura, Premier of the Gauteng Province.

"Cycling should become a way of live, our municipalities must become sustainable", said South Africa's Transport Minister Dipuo Peters, announcing further national policies in support of EcoMobility.

The **"Streets Alive"** bike and walk parade from affluent Sandton to the low-income township of Alexandra on the opening day saw hundreds of citizens, local leaders and mobility experts getting the streets back. The march underlined the close link between EcoMobility and social inclusion: each day thousands of workers walk this distance on narrow sidewalks to reach their work places, while single occupant cars congest the broad motorways.

"The decision to develop unique EcoMobility projects that go beyond urban regeneration to comprise a social inclusion aspect highlights the pioneering spirit of Johannesburg" said Yeom Tae-Young, Mayor of Suwon, where the first EcoMobility Festival took place in 2013.

“EcoMobility is the future for our cities and the key to urban sustainable development, and we are proud that the ICLEI Member Johannesburg takes a lead in ecomobilising business districts”, said Monika Zimmermann, Deputy Secretary General of ICLEI, the global network of sustainable cities, which co-organizes the Festival as a partner to the City of Johannesburg.

From 5 to 9 October, a series of high level **EcoMobility Dialogues** are taking place, in which experts and local leaders will discuss the latest sustainable transport options for the cities of the future.

Under the leadership of Executive Mayor Parks Tau, Johannesburg is setting the example for other cities to fulfil their ambition of moving towards a more sustainable and liveable city for their citizens.

“Our aim is to encourage participation and creative thinking around the issue of EcoMobility and show that Johannesburg is determined to combat climate change”, said Mayor Parks Tau, who will deliver the global cities’ message on EcoMobility and climate-smart cities to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in December 2015.

For more information about the Festival and the Dialogues: www.ecomobilityfestival.org/media/

QUOTES

“Our legs are the best mode of transport. We should not forget to use them”.

Dipuo Peters, South African Minister of Transport

“Cycling should become a way of live, our municipalities must become sustainable.”

Dipuo Peters, South African Minister of Transport

“We won't go to COP21 in Paris and say climate change is ‘complicated’. We will bring solutions”.

Mayor **Parks Tau**, Mayor of Johannesburg

“With the EcoMobility Festival we take a bold step in the same spirit that transformed Johannesburg from a small mining town in a world class city”.

Parks Tau, Mayor of Johannesburg

“Humanity must accept the inconvenient truth that fossil fuel reserves will be depleted twenty or thirty years from now. Therefore, a paradigm shift from car-centered to human-centered urban transportation system is needed to prevent energy crisis and global warming. The EcoMobility World Festival will be the first step in such a change”.

Yeom Tae-young, Mayor of Suwon

“I wish that the city of Joburg will serve as a bridge for social integration through this Festival, just as Madiba helped bring an end to apartheid”.

Yeom Tae-young, Mayor of Suwon

“Giving priority to walking, cycling, sharing vehicles and riding buses and trains means giving priority to better air quality, lesser noise, more space for people, and saving money”.

Monika Zimmermann, ICLEI Deputy Secretary General

EcoMobility – the priority for walking, cycling, wheeling and using public transport in a smart and interconnected way – is the future for our cities.

Monika Zimmermann, ICLEI Deputy Secretary General

“The EcoMobility World Festival will be a dry run of what we'll be forced to do as cities grow, fossil fuels phase out. We might as well enjoy it.”

Jack Van der Merwe, CEO, Gautrain Management Agency

“To move 40,000 people on a stretch of road in an hour, you need a 12 lane road if you want them to use cars, only four lanes with buses and two lanes with bikes.”

Adrian Enthoven, Non-Executive Chairman, Hollard Insurance, Johannesburg

“We can't wait for COP21 to address climate change. We need to take the lead on the local level.”

Kadri Nassiep, CEO, South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI)

“We are not only taking people out of their comfort zone, we are changing the paradigm.”

Kadri Nassiep, CEO, South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI)

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Note to editors:

EcoMobility is travel through integrated, socially inclusive, and environmentally friendly options. EcoMobility describes a new paradigm which sets a clear priority order for both the individual choice of travel option for each trip, and the urban infrastructure design and investment:

1. walking;
2. cycling and wheeling;
3. passenging by public transport; and lastly
4. sharing cars, provided they are small urban vehicles powered by renewable energy.

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is the world's leading network of over 1,000 cities, towns and metropolises committed to building a sustainable future. One of ICLEI's agendas is on EcoMobility. Find more information on ICLEI Strategic Plan 2015 – 2021. www.iclei.org

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