

# Kenya: Westlands launch new road safety initiative

Celebrities and opinion leaders from various quarters of Kenyan society and diplomatic circles will attend the launch of Tame-A-Black Spot (TABS) road safety campaign, along Waiyaki Way/Museum Hill Roundabout, in Westlands, Kenya in December 2009.

## Research inspired

The new TABS concept which is research-inspired aims to break into Kenya's troubled road safety matrix, using a mix of tactics focused to inculcate ethically-based attitudinal change.

Campaign projections include scheduled elaborate sensitisation programmes to be undertaken countrywide, later, and which will cover all the 29 hazardous road sites, already identified by police traffic branch, in conjunction with roads/transport ministries.

## Brainchild

The TABS initiative is the brainchild of the Integrated Commuter Transport Safety Network (ICTSN), a non-profit organisation patronised mainly by university / college fraternities working in conjunction with artistic networks and other community-based organisations within the Westlands and its environs. The concept aims at taking road safety campaigns a notch higher by employing asymmetrical models of communication tailor-made to prepare and disseminate information precisely targeted to relevant road safety interest groups.

Kenya, in spite of its elaborate statutory transport regulatory mechanisms in place, is currently ranked fifth overall in world road accidents league table. The country records a disquieting tally of 3,000 fatalities, 13,000 serious injuries, plus tens of hundreds of assorted incapacitations, annually. The scenario is a disconcerting spectacle which continues to raise eyebrows not only among the nation's economic planners but also its multilateral donor partners. The trend is viewed as a potential threat factor likely to undermine prospects for achieving millennium development goals as well as objectives of the country's vision 2030 economic blueprint.

Further research sources in government, academic, civil society as well as World Bank, WHO and Nordic countries study reports have identified three causative factors linked to serious accidents along hazardous road spots; these are driver-centered, road-related and vehicle-associated. However, surveys pinpoint "driver element" as the one common denominator across the accidents spectrum, supplemented by secondary determinants, like pedestrians, cyclists, commuters, wild animals and environmental variables.

## Social attitudinal change

In authoritative studies, transport social psychology scholars strongly prescribe the need for strategic shift away from conventional emphasis on official statutory, regulatory, enforcement or judicial measures, to more of campaigns designed to facilitate attitudinal change among key players in the transport industry particularly the PSV and heavy commercial vehicles sub-sectors.

## **Pilot launch, Festival in Westlands**

Waiyaki Way/Museum Hill roundabout in Westlands will provide the launching pad for TABS pilot campaign event from 14-19 December 2009. The week-long “festival” will be kicked off with roadshows revolving around “The Torch”, the Tame-A-Black Spot torch to be anchored by a star-studded cast of luminaries representing various specialised societal interests pertinent to particular road safety etiquettes.

The vast array of celebrity ensemble plans to feature, among others, reigning and post beauty pageant queens, former national varsity vice chancellors, noble peace laureates (woman and man), top religious woman, cleric, foremost industrialists, Kenyans former vice president, household names, motor rally drivers and trainers. The torch relay activity plans to also include participation of eminent role models such as trade association heads, comedy personalities, professionals and opinion leaders. Magnetic Athletic Kenya's sports stars will also feature.

## **Other highlights**

Highlights of other festival activities will include: exhibition for PSV and commercial vehicles' products; symposium involving transport policy makers and regulatory organs; light renovations of Waiyaki road/Museum Hill roundabout; face of Tame-A-Black Spot; film shows; display of prototype commuter shuttle bus for persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups; dinner party; grand gala dinner party; roadshows through 15 locations in the district; raffles; unveiling of Tame-A-Black spot anthem, and more.

## **Justification**

Nairobi's Waiyaki Way has been selected to pilot the project, thanks to the highways persistent notoriety for grisly traffic accidents. It also commands the high profile gate-way to the city and typifies the other major routes to and from Kenya's capital city. Notably, this black spot highway also provides linkage to the economically important Great North Road - the Northern Corridor, to transport to and from the other business hubs to landlocked regional neighbouring countries of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the DRC Congo, Southern Sudan and Northern Tanzania.

## **Community project**

Recognised for its critical importance the TABS is being positioned as an entire district community project and the campaign has been affirmatively embraced by the area's provincial administration and is, thus receiving necessary logistical liaison and support from Westlands District Commissioner's office.

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