

# Mahikeng's air links increased

MEC appeals to North West residents to use subsidised services and to fly instead of driving to destinations

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FLIGHTS between Mahikeng and OR Tambo International Airport will soon be available five days a week.

SA Express said the increase in the number of people using the route on Monday, Wednesday and Friday meant that it could now extend flight days to Tuesday and Thursday as well.

Passenger flights between the provincial capital and Johannesburg began in 2015 and records show an exponential rise in the number of people preferring to fly than drive.

Community safety and transport management MEC Mpho Motlhabane said the increase in flights would come at no cost to the government.

He welcomed the development as a step in the right direction for the profile of Mahikeng Airport.

"Our airports continue to provide scheduled passenger flights between Mahikeng and Johannesburg and between Plettenberg to Cape Town," the MEC said.

"The flights take place on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, in the morning and afternoon. Since the reintroduction of the air passenger scheduled



**DEMAND: SAA Express has increased flights to Mahikeng.**

or any other destination. The MEC said measures were in place to have the international licence status at Mahikeng Airport restored. The licence had been given to Plettenberg Airport as a way of promoting tourists to use the airport for landing directly from their countries or cities.

"We anticipate a designation of Mahikeng Airport as a port of entry in the 2018-19 financial year. This will catalyse the process to designate Mahikeng Airport as an international cargo hub in Africa. We have set aside a budget for the refurbishment of two hangers at

Mafikeng Airport to establish an aviation academy," Motlhabane said.

Following Premier Supra Mahumapelo's announcement of renaming Mahikeng Airport during the state of the province address, Motlhabane said the department has embarked on the process of changing the name to George Dick Montshoa Airport and that stakeholder consultation had been concluded.

"The branding and the official launch of the new airport name will be conducted as soon as the South African Civil Aviation Authority has updated the Aerodrome Information Publication," he said.

And R16m has been set aside to purchase two airport fire trucks as part of improving the safety of the airport, he said. Mahumapelo said the airport should be used as a cargo hub that links countries within the South African Development Corporation region.

FF Plus member of the provincial legislature, Johannes Schutte, said he supported the idea of a cargo hub.

"Mahikeng is strategically placed and can become a nerve centre in coordinating the movement of cargo outside our borders," he said.

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