

King Shaka Airport helps generate growth

BY Liesl Venter

The new King Shaka International Airport at La Mercy has generated massive growth in the KwaZulu-Natal airfreight market, allowing companies to grow their Durban-based operations.

Willie De Lange, Intraspeed director for KwaZulu-Natal, says the R7.9 billion government investment, South Africa's second-largest transport infrastructural project after the Gautrain rapid rail link, has made a major impact on business.

"The longer runway is

capable of accommodating the world's largest aircraft and the number of direct scheduled flights by international carriers to this airport is continuing to increase," says De Lange. "A major feature of the new King Shaka International airport is that it was built as an integrated passenger and freight airport alongside the new Dube Tradeport, which incorporates a 36-hectare trade zone featuring a 15 800 sqm cargo terminal, perishables centre, warehousing and further manufacturing facilities. The fully mechanised and automated cargo terminal – only the second of its kind in

Africa – offers state-of-the-art airfreight handling facilities, which Intraspeed is ready to take full advantage of."

The company has already drawn up expansion plans for its operation in KZN, said De Lange. "Durban is still a lifeline for the SADC region, and having our own operations in countries such as Swaziland and Zimbabwe provides significant opportunities that we continue to capitalise on. Richards Bay is also integral to our operation, moving large capital equipment from the Far and Middle East into southern African regions. Growing our KZN operation is therefore a priority."

Automotive business fosters airfreight growth

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Increased trucking between Johannesburg and Durban as well as capacity constraints at the new operational facility are some of the challenges faced by SAA Cargo, says Venita Bunsee, acting terminal manager for SAA Cargo in Durban.

"Despite this the Durban market has performed relatively well in the past year. The market remains consistent, with international demand for automotive products increasing."

There is no denying that there have been teething problems at the new operational facility," says

of clients, however we are addressing these issues with Worldwide Flight Services (WFS)."

On the upside there have been a number of automotive contracts which have recently been awarded to clients in the Durban region, and as a result airfreight demand has increased.

"The increase in trucking between Johannesburg and Durban has posed some competition on this route, in particular resulting in a decline in yields in the sector at times."

With the new airport in Durban there is much room for development, says Bunsee.

"Not only from a functional



Venita Bunsee ... 'decline in yields in the sector.'

opportunities for northern KwaZulu-Natal for both airfreight and the economy at large.

"We retain our daytime and