

Jozi hosts WWF EcoMobility Challenge

The WWF EcoMobility Challenge, a WWF South Africa initiative held in association with the City of Johannesburg, recently took place in Johannesburg.



Morne du Plessis (CEO of WWF South Africa) with EcoMobility supporters and Maps Maponyane cycling their way to the finish line

The challenge was aimed at demonstrating the solutions available to tackle climate change, while at the same time highlighting the benefits in shifting to public from private transport.

Held during the month-long global EcoMobility World Festival, the challenge saw teams of racers navigating a series of destination checkpoints across Johannesburg using only public transport, minibus taxis, or electric or non-motorised transport.

Kicking off at the WWF building in Braamfontein, Lisa Seftel, executive director of Transport for the City of Joburg, opened the race and gave teams their first clue.

Lowest carbon footprint

The teams worked hard puzzling out clues which led them to Hector Peterson Square, to Orlando Stadium, to Maponya Mall and on to the Sanlam building in Sandton. Armed only with maps, public transport timetables and other tools to guide them, and their commitment to the cause, all strategised with the end goal in mind - to be the team with the lowest carbon footprint to cross the endpoint before the cut-off time.

Racers' adventures included tackling the Rea Vaya interchanges, fighting off other commuters for spots on eTukTuk, learning the signs to 'uptown' and 'downtown' when hailing minibus taxis, walking for kilometres in the heat, and riding bicycles - something many racers admitted to not having done in several years.

At the end it was a team comprising Graeme Stephens (CEO of Sun International), Liesl Laurie (Miss South Africa), Bongani Xakaza (South African National Energy Development Institute) and Innocent Nkosi (University of Johannesburg) who came out tops.

Valli Moosa, chair of the WWF South Africa board, handed the team that won their prize, but it was not all fun and games. MMC of Transport, Christine Walters, who also took part in the challenge, then addressed the awards ceremony on the city's Strategic Integrated Transport Plan and how this addresses climate change.

Increased commitments

"There is a serious need for national governments at COP21 to increase their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions - the gases driving climate change," Louise Naudé, WWF South Africa's lead on low-carbon transport and climate change, said.

"The pledges they have put on the table fall far short of the reductions we need if we are to keep average global warming below 2°C. What's scary is that at 2°C globally, Africa will be up to between 3°C and 4°C. Climate change could reverse all the developmental gains we have made."

CEO of WWF-SA, Morné du Plessis, was surprised to see the willingness of the people of Johannesburg to engage with strangers who wanted to ask them questions about transport. "As individuals, we can reduce our own carbon footprint in many ways. But the single biggest contribution we can make is to 'change the way you move' as the city's theme says. Our race today showed the way," he said.

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