**GO!DURBAN Includes Historic Fig into Plans**

The construction of GO!Durban, the Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network (IRPTN) through New Germany, the initiative by the eThekwini Municipality to provide a public transport system for the citizens of Durban, is advancing well.

Part of the construction of this IRPTN requires the widening of Qashana Khuzwayo Road (formerly Shepstone Road), and the construction of a bus lane and station with a side walk. The widened road will be located close to an existing fig tree on the corner of Regent Street and Qashana Khuzwayo Road. This Natal Fig tree, with its aesthetic value, is a landmark tree that has been present in its current location for well over 60 years. It is a prominent feature to the area and well appreciated by local residents and business people.

To avoid high and large vehicles bumping into some overhanging branches, controlled trimming of some branches of the tree are necessary. The process will necessitate that about 40% of the overhanging branches of the tree canopy mass is trimmed. The root system of the tree on the road/pavement side will also be trimmed to the depth necessary for the road layers to be constructed. The cut roots will then be painted with a retarding agent so that they do not grow again and damage the new road. Only a maximum of 20% of the total root system will be affected and will not prove fatal for the tree, as fig trees are very resilient and can handle the “haircut” comfortably.

An experienced tree feller will be appointed to do the alterations and an Environmental Scientist and Heritage Officer will be present at all times to oversee the process. An Application to allow these alterations has been submitted to AMAFA /Heritage KwaZulu Natal, and has subsequently been endorsed.

In the past months, trenches along the site were dug to relocate existing services and sleeves were laid to accommodate future services. Following this activity, surfacing of roads has started and the roads are taking shape. The newly constructed roads will complement the tree significantly.