

University of Venda

School of Environmental Sciences

Department of Urban and Regional Planning

**ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AIR TRANSPORTATION
IN STIMULATING LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN
VHEMBE DISTRICT**

CASE STUDY: P. R. MPHEPHU AIRPORT

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**This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the award of B.URP Honours Degree to the Department of Urban and
Regional Planning, School of Environmental Sciences, University of Venda,
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2014

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ABSTRACT

Air transportation and airports have evolved as the drivers or engines of economic development, business location and urban and regional development in this 21st century in the same way as highways did in the 20th century, railroads in the 19th century and seaports in the 18th Century. Based on these perspective the study assesses the contributions that air transportation has, had and can have in stimulating Local Economic Development (LED) in Vhembe District, using P. R. Mphephu Airport as a case study.

The study first explores the extent of the relationship that exists between air transportation and LED. It then assesses the past and present contributions that P. R Mphephu has on local LED. The study also sought to predict the various impacts that the airport can have to development in the future after and before the recommended proposals had been put in place.

Data for the study was collected mainly through questionnaire survey, where questionnaires were administered to LED experts. Interviews with various airport officials were done to obtain in-depth information about the operations at the airport. Observations in various LED hubs and in sampled clusters in the catchment area were also carried out on the basis of theoretical postulations of the Aerotropolis Concept. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Microsoft excels and airport economic based models were used to present and analyse the data from field work.

The study revealed that there is a relationship between air transportation and LED which is reliant and dependent on the speed and agility air transportation provides. The study also reviewed that P. R. Mphephu Airport had direct, indirect, induced and multiplier effects to LED. Major challenges were also discerned. These included deteriorating airport infrastructure and the general under utilization of facilities amongst others. The study concludes by recommending that a master plan has to be developed for the airport amongst other proposals.

Key words: *Airports, LED, Air transportation and Past, Present and Future Contributions.*