



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES
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OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES, HONOURABLE N. A. MASONDO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE MINISTERIAL BRIEFING ON TRANSPORT UNDER THE TOPIC 'MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE TRANSPORT INDUSTRY'.

DATE: 6 MAY 2021 **VENUE:** VIRTUAL **TIME:** 14H00

Programme Director, Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Sylvia Lucas

Minister of Transport, Honourable Fikile Mbalula

House Chairpersons, Honourable Winnie Ngwenya and Honourable Jomo Nyambi

Chief Whip of the National Council of Provinces, Honourable Seiso Mohai

Honourable Permanent and Special Delegates

Representatives of the South African Local Government Association

Ladies and gentlemen

Programme Director, transport is a crucial driver of economic growth. As a result, it plays an essential role in poverty reduction. The transport industry helps to facilitate the movement of goods and services at municipal, provincial, national, regional and global levels, which in return helps to promote and strengthen economic growth.

I therefore welcome with appreciation the opportunity to make the opening remarks on the occasion of the Ministerial Briefing on Mitigating the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Transport Industry.

This ministerial briefing has been organised in order to equip us as the public representatives with information so as to be able to fully understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country. The information should assist us:

- Firstly, to assess the implementation of the measures put in place in terms of the Disaster Management Act and their effect; and
- Secondly, to assist us to assess what is required to achieve government's commitment of turning the country's economy around.

As Members are aware, the national and global response to the spread of the coronavirus required the implementation of measures that were intended to prevent infection and to slow transmission. These included the observance of hygiene etiquette, social distancing rules, implementation of community-containment measures and the lockdown strategy.

In the case of South Africa's transport industry, the Minister of Transport was required to issue directions in accordance with the regulations made under the Disaster Management Act of 2002. These directions were in respect of:

- Domestic air travel;
- Rail, bus services, taxi services;
- E-hailing services; and
- Private vehicles.

The Minister was also required to set out the health protocols that must be adhered to and steps to be followed for the limitation of the exposure to the virus of members of the public when using public transport.

Given the nature of these interventions, it was unavoidable that the COVID-19 pandemic would cause untold damage to the transport sector. It is reported that at the height of the pandemic the transport industry suffered an unprecedented fall in passenger numbers of between 60% and 90% globally. It is still not clear how this sector will fully recover from such a huge and devastating impact.

Needless to say, our governments rely on the transport infrastructure as a means to accelerate economic recovery and growth.

In the case of South Africa, such economic recovery must take into account the fact that the National Development Plan regards transport as an enabler for economic development. As a consequence, it makes the following assumptions:

“Moving towards 2030, South Africa’s transport system will support economic development, job creation and growth, providing equitable

access to opportunities and services for all and reducing poverty. ... Emphasis will be placed on total system efficiency to maximise the strengths of different modes, cut inefficiencies and reduce disparities, with the least environmental, social and economic cost”.

Towards this end, the Department of Transport has sought to provide a policy framework, regulation and implementation models in the following areas:

- Ensuring competitive transport costs;
- Safety and security improvements;
- Reducing infrastructure backlogs;
- Improving access; and
- Reducing time in transit.

It is therefore important for us, as the public representatives who are charged with the constitutional duty to oversee the Executive in the different spheres of our government, to be appraised of the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic would impact the pursuit of these goals.

In the same breath, it is worth noting that infrastructure investment and delivery is one of the priority interventions of the country’s Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan. The plan, which was unveiled by the President of the Republic to a Joint Sitting of Parliament in October last year, sets out a reconstruction and recovery plan for the South African economy that is aimed at stimulating equitable and inclusive growth.

The plan points out that as part of prioritising infrastructure development for network industries, the modernisation of freight and public transport will receive immediate attention. This will include the implementation of the following:

- Reversing delays in Metrorail modernisation including prioritising the refurbishment of the Mabopane line in Tshwane and the Central line in Cape Town;
- Ensuring improved efficiencies at ports of entry;
- Protecting passenger and freight infrastructure from vandalism, arson and other crimes; and
- Fast-tracking the approved Integrated Public Transport Networks in 5 Cities, providing support to the taxi industry, the development of the small harbours project and the roll out of a labour intensive rural roads asset network using alternative technologies as well as local supply and value chains.

This reinforces the fact that transport is an important tool for development and the transformation of our society. Therefore, the transport industry is critical in the realisation of the principle contained in the Freedom Charter that ‘the people shall share in the country’s wealth’.

Given the fact that economic activities cannot take place without an infrastructure base, the transport sector provides the necessary wheels for

the building of a more equal society, in which all can find decent work and enjoy a sustainable livelihood.

Programme director, I wish to thank you for affording me this opportunity to make these opening remarks. I am looking forward to the deepening of the conversation on matters that are germane to the goal of achieving accelerated economic growth in spite of the challenges and circumstances we continue to face.

Thank you