

ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, AMBASSADOR CHUPU
MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE PROVINCIAL TRANSPORT
INDABA, HELD AT THE RANCH RESORT.

25 October 2018

Programme Director, MEC Makoma Makhurupetje;
Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality,
Executive Mayor of Polokwane Local Municipality,
Head of Department of Transport,
SAPS Provincial Commissioner
Police and Traffic officials
Members of the Road Safety Councils
RAF representatives
Taxi and bus operators
Members of the Media
Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning!

Let me start by thanking all for you for such an overwhelming response to this Provincial Transport Indaba. Your presence here is highly valued and appreciated.

I am reliably advised that everyone who must be here is indeed here with us today. This Indaba is graced with the presence of all our stakeholders in the transport industry. I am confident that your presence here today will go a long way in enhancing the quality of our discussions and our resolutions.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend our MEC, Mme Makoma Makhurupetje, the HOD and all the officials in the Department for organising this important Provincial Transport Indaba.

This is an important platform which has been availed to all of us to deliberate on crucial issues such as:

- ü The role of various stakeholders in the implementation of legislation regulating the transport industry,
- ü Issues relating to the instability in the Taxi Industry
- ü Issues relating to the status of passenger and freight rail services in the province, and,
- ü The thorny issue of the high rate of road crash fatalities in our province.

Programme Director;

As you know, this Indaba comes just days after a horrific accident involving multiple vehicles that happened on the N1 near Kranskop this past Friday.

The Province is still reeling with shock at such a tragic loss of lives.

We are told that the accident was caused by a front wheel tyre burst from a truck that was travelling in the northerly direction which lost control and hit several vehicles including a mini-bus taxi that was travelling towards the south.

As a result of this terrible accident, we have lost 25 people from the mini-bus taxi and another 2 from an SUV. The overall number of lives lost on that fateful afternoon is 27. About 4 others have sustained serious injuries –we wish them a complete and speedy recovery.

We also wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to the families and relatives of those who have perished in this accident.

To honour the memories of these departed sons and daughters of our Province, I request that we all stand up and observe a moment of silence.

-----I thank you -----

Programme Director;

Whenever we think about transport we think about a movement from point A to point B. However, transport plays a role which is far bigger and far more important than merely taking people from one point to the other.

Transport is a serious catalyst for socio-economic growth and development. Transport brings about opportunities and improves the people's quality of life.

The growth of any economy is largely dependent on the availability of effective and reliable transport system.

For an example, last month when we were in China on a trade mission, we learnt that there are two things which are the heartbeat of China's economy. The first thing is the technological revolution; the second one is their efficiency of their public transport system.

Just to share with you, cities such as Shanghai and Beijing have some of the world's fastest trains.

One of their fastest trains clocks over 430 Kilometres per hour. This means that one can easily do an in-and-out from Polokwane to Cape Town without much hustle. You can do this without wasting unnecessary hours on the road or without incurring additional accommodation costs.

This is exactly what the economy needs. For an example, a Limpopo business person who is required to be physically present to a meeting in Cape Town should not be expected to spend over 18 hours on the road.

An effective and reliable transport system reduces the cost of doing business.

A reliable transport system also goes a long way in attracting investments.

You need an effective and reliable transport system to stimulate the growth of the economy.

This reminds me of the objection we had when the government of Gauteng first introduced the idea of Gau-Train. Many people were opposed to this idea, arguing that it is elitist and a waste of money.

I guess this opposition was based on ignorance about the role of transport in stimulating economic growth.

Today I think no one can dispute the fact that Gau-Train is doing wonders to the local economy of Gauteng.

The other point is that an effective public transport system will also contribute to the efforts to contain the effects of climate change and global warming.

If people can trust our trains, trust our buses and taxis, they will find it easy to leave their private vehicles at home and use public transport.

The fewer the vehicles on our roads the less of carbon emissions we will have. With less carbon emissions our environment will be much healthier - even the air we breathe will be of a much better quality.

The other point is that when we have fewer vehicles on the road, we will definitely have fewer road crashes, and we will save more lives.

The fact is that reducing road fatalities also contributes to the growth of the economy.

The accidents that take place on our roads everyday also results in significant losses to the economy.

My colleagues from RAF and RTMC will expand much better on this point. However, the other point is that these road fatalities results in significant loss of human capital.

We lose many people who are still economically active and we lose them with all their skills and experiences. This is not good for any economy.

Programme Director;

What we also need is a public transport system that complements each other.

One must be able to leave his private vehicle wherever it can be parked, take a maxi taxi to the nearest taxi rank, take a minibus taxi to the mall and later take a metered taxi to the airport for his long trip.

We should be able to do this in a manner that is cordial and complementary.

It is for this reason that as government we have a duty to support our taxi industry.

I am happy that this Indaba will dedicate sufficient time to deal with issues that emanates from the taxi industry.

We know that there are challenges in that sector which requires our urgent attention and action.

This summit should be able to spell out exactly the kind of interventions we need to make in order to make our taxi industry more competitive and attractive.

It is also up to the industry itself to propose innovations which will assist in sustaining this important industry. What we can assure you is that the taxi industry has a full support of this government.

I must also take this opportunity to commend our taxi operators in the province for the relative stability we are witnessing in the industry.

Gone are those days when our taxi ranks were regarded as the epicentres of violence, harassment and abuse.

In the past, you would find drivers swearing at passengers –drivers smoking inside the kombis and at times some even drinking and driving.

We commend our Associations and Taxi owners for working very hard to change the image of the taxi industry. You have done a good job and you must continue protecting the image of your business.

As government, we are also thankful to the taxi industry for having created thousands of jobs, both direct and indirect, to the people of our province.

Programme Director;

The government continues to play a significant role in providing an efficient, reliable and affordable public transport system through subsidies to various bus companies.

As we speak, almost 100 buses on our roads are subsidised by government. These buses are not in competition with the taxi industry; they instead, supplement the good work done by the taxi industry.

Thousands of commuters rely on buses operated by Great North or private buses subsidised by government.

Our subsidy to the bus industry ensures that the cost for transportation is kept at minimal so that our people can afford transport.

In the past we were short-changed by some bus operators who were not servicing some routes according to our agreement with them.

We have therefore embarked on a campaign to install Electronic Vehicle Trip Monitoring System on all the buses we are subsidising. This process is ongoing, and we hope to install this system on all our buses in no time.

Programme Director;

The Polokwane Gateway International Airport is also an important member of our provincial transport family. Although the Airport has grown significantly in terms of the flights services, there are still some challenges at the Airport.

It is for this reason that we have instructed the Gateway Airport Authority Limited to finalise its Turn-Around Strategy. We are also finalising the appointment of the CEO for GAAL.

The idea is that we need the Polokwane Airport to be returned for full economic viability

because such viability will also contribute to the economic fortunes of our province. We are also focussed on revitalising the infrastructure in many other Airports across the province, including the Hoedspruit Airport, the Giyani Airport, the Airport in Lephalale and the Airport in Musina.

If we can succeed to revitalise these Airports and bring them to full use, we would have contributed significantly to the growth of our provincial economy.

Programme Director;

The reliability of our public transport system is largely supported by our law enforcement officers. These are the men and women who work abnormal hours to ensure that we all arrive alive to our various destinations.

We want to take this opportunity to thank them and urge them to continue doing the good job they are already doing.

We also urge both our private and public transport operators to work with our law enforcers to make our roads safer and more reliable.

I want to conclude by urging all of you to participate freely in this Indaba. We want to hear all of your views, criticisms and suggestions.

Together, we must find ways to build a transport system which will be a true driver of our socio-economic development.

I thank you very much!