

SPEECH BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, MR CHUPU MATHABATHA ON
THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF GREAT NORTH BUSES, PLATINUM
STREET, LADANA.

25 February 2020

Programme Director, Advocate Ncube;
MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Ntate Thabo
Mokone;
MEC for Transport and Community Safety, Ntate Dickson Masemola;
MEC for Provincial Treasury, Ntate Seaparo Sekoati;
The GNT Board of Directors,
Members of the Transport Forum,
Our Director General, Ntate Nape Nchabeleng;
Esteemed members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you for honouring our invitation to this media launch. As already explained, we have invited you here so that you can join us to witness the handover of part of our new fleet of GNT buses.

I must say from the onset that our aim is to build a land transport system that puts the needs of the people at the centre.

We believe that improving our public transport system is a critical part of our broader development agenda. As you would know, bus transport remains amongst the biggest mode of public transport in this Province.

We rely on the bus system to ferry people to and from work on daily basis. If we should put it correctly, we should say that the bus system is the heart beat of our Provincial economy. Without these buses there will be very few people reporting to work in most sectors of our economy.

Great North Transport is a major player in this space. GNT operates in four of our five districts. On monthly basis GNT ferries millions of people to and from work. The company also offer bus hire services to private clients.

What distinguishes Great North Transport from any other bus company is the fact that this is the people's company; it is a bus company that places the socio-economic interest of its clients ahead of profit.

It is for this reason that this company is way too important to fail. As government, we are committed to working with GNT to resolve some of the company's challenges, including its much publicised liquidity challenges.

It is for this reason that we have supported GNT's Turnaround Strategy. At the core of this Strategy are efforts to position GNT as a self-sustaining entity which operates a reliable and effective public transport.

This is because we believe that an effective, efficient and reliable public transport is a necessary pre-condition for economic development.

We have accordingly allocated an amount of R380 million for the recapitalisation of GNT over a period of three years. Part of this money is the one used to procure this fleet of new buses.

Today we are receiving the first batch of 13 brand new buses. In the next few weeks we will receive the remaining fleet of 62 buses.

Through supporting GNT, we continue to ensure that the price of public transport, which is the largest mode of transport for the poor, remain affordable.

This in turn helps to ensure that the poor and the working class use their income on important social items such as food and clothing.

Over and above GNT, 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.

Our bus subsidy sustains over 2000 permanent jobs in the industry. In the coming Financial; Year, we have set aside an amount of over R814 million to support the public transport industry.

Programme Director;

The truth 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 lose to the economy.

The fact is that these road fatalities results in significant lose 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.

Ladies and gentlemen;

The safety of our buses is very important. It is for this reason that we procured our buses from a well-known and reputable manufacture.

Significant safety features come standard with the buses we are launching today. The safety of our people come first, anything else is secondary.

However, the issue of safety is not limited to manufacture and mechanical health of the buses.

We all know that the major cause of accidents on our roads is the behaviour of motorist. Human factor is responsible for a significant number of accidents on our roads.

It is for this reason that we invite all of you to assist us in making our buses safer. All our buses have maximum speed limitation.

We want all of you to name and shame any of our drivers who drive beyond the identified speed limit.

Report any reckless driving both to GNT and to our traffic police. We don't want our buses to become glorified moving coffins.

On the contrary, we want Great North Transport to become a transport of choice in this Province.

We want journeys through GNT to always be safer and memorable.

Programme Director,

I want to conclude by urging all to join us in building a public transport system which will be a true driver of our socio-economic development.

The future is Great North Transport.

I thank you very much!