



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

Debate on Transport: Moving South Africa Safely on Time

27 October 2011

Honourable Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces

Honourable Minister of Transport

Honourable MECs

Honourable Members of the NCOP and Special Delegates

SALGA believes that in order to move South Africa safely on time, we have got to attend to the following:

1. Promotion of use of safe, efficient and affordable public transport
2. Getting freight off the roads
3. Funding of roads infrastructure maintenance
4. Traffic management

1. Public Transport

Efficient public transport is the future in dense built areas the world over. Sustained increase in vehicle travel demand puts pressure on the existing road and parking capacity, leading to a need for further expansion of roads infrastructure. However, building more roads and parking spaces only temporary decreases traffic congestion. Instead of

adding more road lanes and upgrading roads and bridges, there is a need to prioritise improving alternative transport mechanisms that will meet the needs of communities and businesses.

SALGA appreciates the strides taken so far in respect of supporting the implementation of and roll-out Rapid Transit Systems in four cities.

However, some of the cities have indicated concern that the Rapid Transit System has been reduced into only a Bus Rapid Transport system. Where a city prefers a Rapid Transit System that is not anchored on using buses e.g. rail, this does not appear to find favour from Department of Transport officials.

We are proposing that, in the medium term, we focus on supporting the major cities with assigning them the appropriate powers and functions and financial resources and support them to build the requisite capacity to take full responsibility for planning and managing multimodal city public transport.

2. Getting freight off the roads

SALGA appreciates the focus of government in respect of building the necessary infrastructure capacity so that we may eventually get freight off the roads into rail transport. There is a need to consider use of such instruments as vehicle licensing for trucks to stimulate modal shift of freight from roads to rail while at the same time getting the licensing fee for trucks to reflect the road maintenance costs associated with use of roads by heavy trucks.

3. Funding of roads infrastructure maintenance

SALGA appreciate the steps that the Minister has taken in launching the S'hamba Sonke. But we understand the focus of this program on secondary roads to mean that it is about only those roads that are responsibilities of provinces. It does not include municipal roads, mostly access roads.

With the exception of tolled roads, the roads infrastructure is generally funded from tax. In the case of local government, this tax is property rates tax. In rural areas there is no property rates tax payment. National Fiscus contributes on behalf of poor households, in the form of MIG, some limited amount for the provision of basic services infrastructure, including basic level of roads infrastructure. This means that those rural households that are not reflected in the Stats SA data as poor, as well as rural businesses, do not contribute to the costs of providing roads infrastructure in their areas.

Therefore urban rate payers and poor rural households, who are paid for by the national fiscus, have to carry this unfair subsidy burden to the rural middle and high income households and businesses. Unfortunately, a municipality cannot overtax those urban rates payers leading to situations where there is no financial provision for investment and maintenance of the rural roads infrastructure except for the small contribution made by the national fiscus, on behalf of poor households. Ironically, middle and high income households and businesses are the most vocal in their demand for good quality roads because of the impact it has in their vehicles.

Consequently roads expenditure statistics indicate that between 2003/04 and 2009/10 municipalities spent on average R156 per kilometre of road

compared to R258 and R3 million by provincial and national government respectively. Smaller rural municipalities spend much less. Even taking into account that the three spheres of government are responsible for different classes of roads, the differences are just too big. This is not a consequence of choice by municipalities, it is a result of financial resource constraints.

Complicating this matter more, is the fact that about 221 000 kilometres of roads remain unallocated between the provinces, district and local municipalities, this means that monitoring of the condition and maintenance of this vast portfolio of roads infrastructure falls between the cracks (the pun is intended). Since all roads are in a municipal area, municipalities are forced to take some care of these unallocated and therefore unfunded roads. Since establishment of municipalities in 2000, local government has been calling for the resolution of this matter.

This underfunding leads to the evident deterioration of rural roads which leads to accelerated deterioration of user vehicles and road accidents.

We would like to request the Minister to work with SALGA and National Treasury to find a solution to this challenge.

4. Road Traffic Law Enforcement

The country has been hoping that the implementation of the Administrative Adjudication of Road Traffic Offences (AARTO) will be a significant step-up in traffic law enforcement. However, it appears that the level of centralisation associated with the implementation of AARTO is working against it. A review of the need for this level of centralisation needs to be considered.

In Conclusion

SALGA believes that attention to these four interrelated matters: namely Promotion of use of safe, efficient and affordable public transport, Getting freight off the roads, Funding of roads infrastructure maintenance and Traffic management; will go a long way towards Moving South Africa Safely on Time.

I thank you.

Cllr Pinkie Moloi