**NATIONAL ASSEMLY**

**WEDNESDAY, 18 MAY 2022**

***MINI PLENARIES (VIRTUAL)***

**14:00 – 16:15**

**Budget Vote 40: Transport**

**Hon. KP Sithole, MP**

Honourable Chairperson,

This Department has been tasked with ensuring the safety of every South African who makes use of transport. This Department’s management and the performance of its entities, as we are well aware, directly impacts the fragile economic growth of our country.

Unfortunately, this Department is failing to deliver on its mandate. We can all attest to the poor current state of our roads, the poor maintenance and lack of overall development.

For example, the Moloto Road (also known as the ‘death road’), which stretches over 160 km, spans three provinces – Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo - and has more than 1 000 vehicles travelling on it during peak hours. A feasibility study in 200,6 and then again in 2014, cost the tax-payer approximately R17 million,  merely to inform government that the road with the highest accident rate in Mpumalanga requires drastic government action in order to save lives. Yet today, the road is still incomplete and progress - if any - has been very slow to say the least. However, it has been shown that upgrading this road could prevent the loss of thousands of lives each year, as well as improve economic development for the people, reduce excessive commuting distances and provide greater access to work opportunities.

It is quite clear that by not working within its own time frames to upgrade this large stretch of road, this Department - and government - is in fact behaving negligently. They are aware of the deaths on this road, but have toyed with the allocated budget for this road, whilst making the people believe that change is coming soon.

Honourable Chairperson, whilst Moloto Road is one of the biggest concerns in relation to the Transport Department’s obligations, there are other areas that are suffering due to poor maintenance. The potholes in Mpumalanga, North West, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal create severe obstacles to the development of our economy, cause huge damage and inflict injuries on road users. We also have enormous sinkholes, which also pose a danger to the wellbeing of our road users, especially on the R71 from the Free State to Okhahlamba. This tells us that this Department is not only failing the people in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo through the Moloto Road Project but also on other important stretches of road in this country.

The IFP calls on this Department to provide quarterly reports on the Moloto Road and Corridor Projects. Each quarter the Minister must appear before Parliament to account for the expenditure and progress. Civil society groups must also be invited to raise concerns during each quarter regarding the progress in this regard.

We support the Committee’s call for this Department to provide a comprehensive national, provincial, and municipal account of all road maintenance and expenditure. They must also submit a three-month forecasting of all road maintenance to be completed.

In closing, Honourable Chairperson, this Department must seek to rectify the issues with the payments to the taxi industry, as per the Covid-19 Relief Fund. The lack of attention paid to resolving this issue will have severe consequences on commuters using public transportation, in the form of increasing costs. Government has pledged to reduce the impact on all South Africans through making funds available to ease the burden of rising transportation costs and so too, it needs to pay attention to the taxi industry.

The IFP rejects the Budget.