Debate on Vote No 40 – Transport, Appropriation Bill [B 3 – 2023] (National Assembly – sec 77).

By the Honourable KP Sithole

Honourable Chairperson,

By the end of the 3rd quarter of 2022, the Department of Transport and its entities had underspent its budget by approximately R1.5 billion. Despite this, there are many challenges that need urgent addressing, such as the **POOR** state of our roads, bridges that have collapsed and in **NEED** of repair. **IMIGWAQO YAKITHI IMIGODIGODI!!** With these challenges that face the citizens of our country daily, it is unbelievable that the department and its entities feel that underspending of its budget will solve these issues.

It is especially contradictory that the entities under this department, such as PRASA, SAMSA and the RTIA, are underperforming and failing - by blaming the lack of funding whilst also underspending. These entities have also yet to submit their Annual Performance Plans (APPs) to Parliament, which clearly shows their lack of will to account to the people of this country. We call on the Minister to provide answers on how entities under this department can achieve their turn-around strategies if they are grossly underspending their budgets.

Honourable Chairperson, the IFP has continuously been calling for the formalisation of the taxi industry, and unfortunately, this has turned out to be a non-starter programme. The government has failed to approach all relevant stakeholders in the taxi industry such as the National Taxi Alliance (NTA). This means that one of the biggest Taxi associations that transport millions of people had not been given an opportunity to contribute to how its formalisation could look. This is unacceptable as more than 15 million people make use of this vital industry per day.

Public transport in South Africa is a key player in the travel and economy of our country yet government has not sought to make key changes that will protect all commuters and especially our children. We must seek to standardise scholar transport in all provinces. where scholars have access to safe, reliable and affordable transportation. We cannot continue in a fashion that would knowingly put our children at risk. Currently there is a situation where scholar transport in some provinces are in the care of the Department of Transport and others under Basic Education. Whatever the government’s reasons are for splitting the two, we must ensure that this system of transportation meets the highest possible standards of safety, reliability and cost-effectiveness.

The Department needs to account for the misalignment between the plans it shares every year in the National Assembly and its actual performance and service delivery, or its lack thereof.

Despite the above-mentioned concerns, the IFP has carefully considered its view to support the Bill.