**African Christian Democratic Party**

 **18 May 2022

ACDP Parliament
Budget Vote 40: Transport
Speech by ACDP President, Rev Kenneth Meshoe MP**

**ACDP leader tells Transport Minister to stop spending on consultants and to fill department's 183 vacant posts**

* **wants cost-effective, reliable, safe, and efficient transport for South Africans**

“House Chairperson,

I firstly want to convey, on behalf of the ACDP, our sincere condolences to families who have lost their loved ones in accidents that were caused by the poor state of our roads, particularly potholes. We also wish a speedy recovery to all those who are still recovering from those accidents.

A major feature of what was reported as an attempted insurrection that threatened to topple our democracy last July was the closure of the N3. This was an act of economic sabotage and a threat to the food security of our nation. It caused a national crisis which damaged our economy and severely dented our international image – just as the instigators of the violence wanted it to.

The ACDP welcomes the sentencing to 20 years behind bars of a taxi industry worker for his involvement in the burning down of a train carriage last month. According to the prosecutor, “The impact these incidents have on the poor in our communities is where the real tragedy lay. Trains are the cheapest form of transport. When they are put out of service, commuters are forced to use taxis, which are more expensive and unaffordable for many workers.

Hon Minister, efficient and affordable transport systems are essential to the lives of all South Africans. When public roads are full of potholes, residents are hesitant, or even afraid to drive at night, particularly when it rains. When trains stop running, workers, including street vendors who depend on cheap train tickets to go to markets are left stranded. When there is no safe or efficient public transport, emergencies become life-threatening and family time after work becomes a luxury.

The ACDP has some serious concerns about the Department’s spending patterns. From the budget of R69,1 billion, the financing of consultants is set to increase by 73,3% this year. An amount of R3,5-million was spent on consultants last year, and this year a budget of R13,1-million has been allocated. We wonder why the Administration programme need a 12,2% increase in its allocation to office accommodation? We also want to know when the department is going to reduce their 20% staff vacancy rate, by filling the 183 unfilled posts they have. Rather than spend more money on consultants every year, the department should rather capacitate their current employees and urgently fill vacant posts with qualified and competent personnel who can do the job well.

Maintenance of roads at provincial and municipal levels is appalling. According to the Automobile Association, “When it rains in certain areas, roads become gridlocked as even small streams become impassable. Storm-water drains are clogged resulting in torrents of water flowing down busy roads, making it impossible for vehicles to use them. New potholes are created, and existing potholes get even bigger and deeper. Actions by motorists who swerve to avoid hitting these potholes, which then result in crashes, is ascribed to human error, which correctly should be potholes caused by poor road maintenance.”

Poor maintenance, Hon Minister, is also poor stewardship of tax-funded national assets. Proper maintenance is actually much cheaper than rehabilitation. According to the President of the South African Road Federation Saied Solomons, “Maintenance extends the structural life of a road. But when this does not take place on time, the road deteriorates rapidly, and instead of road maintenance, road rehabilitation is required and the costs soar.”

Chairperson, the Road Transport programme also “oversees road transport public entities.” According to the Budget Analysis report, however, “Continued delays in the printing and delivery of driving licence cards, along with breakdowns of the printing machine, proposals to introduce a new card format, and interruptions and failures of the online booking systems were noted, and the Department was requested to give honest feedback to the Committee on the backlog and system failures for the issuing of driving licence cards.”

The ACDP is very disappointed that the Department of Transport has to be requested by the Portfolio Committee to give “honest feedback” on the challenges around drivers’ licences. We would like to urge the Minister not to squander the goodwill of law-abiding South Africans who want to comply with government regulations. We ask him stop frustrating them with online booking systems that do not work, but to focus on deploying traffic officers to roads where drunkards sit behind steering-wheels and vehicles are driven at night without lights. Provinces and municipalities must be directed to fix broken traffic lights.

In conclusion, Hon Minister, South Africans need cost-effective, reliable, safe and efficient transport.

I thank you.”