

Maintenance plans or the dream of bullet trains?

By Thamsanqa Mabhena MP – DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Transport

Ngiyathokoza Sihlalo,

Ngilotjhise uMdosiphambili we Hlangano engekulu ephikisako, u Mhlonitjha u Maimane

Angekho,

The Shadow Minister of Transport Honorable Chris Hunsinger,

Ngilotjhisa naso soke isitjhaba,

Chairperson,

According to Stats SA, 16.3% of the average household's monthly income is spent on transport. This is contained in the Living Conditions Survey of 2014/15 and it paints a bleak picture of the average spending patterns of South Africans - especially the poor and lower income households.

The Department of Transport (DoT) is failing dismally to lessen this burden on the poor. If this was a government led by the Democratic Alliance (DA), the DoT would be doing everything in its power to improve the mobility challenges faced by all South Africans. To date, this is not the case, currently the situation is deteriorating, and it is becoming near impossible for South Africans to mitigate the high costs of transport.

Chairperson,

The impact that efficient transport has on the ability of all South Africans to maximize their opportunities and reach their full potential can never be overstated. It is for this reason that we believe that our approach to public transport and mobility of citizens should always seek to advance their aspirations. We should seek to connect communities and the world in a way that is a catalyst for development, rather than a stumbling block to their resolve.

Amahlelo wozokuthutha ahleleke kuhle, aletha amathuba wemisebenzi, athuthukise ne labour mobility begodu ahlanganisa nemiphakathi. Not only that, but it is also a key driver for economic development and transformation.

Chairperson,

The DoT Annual Performance Plan (APP) for the period 2019\20 falls short of adequately addressing the above disparities in a balanced and efficient manner. In fact, the Minister of Transport, Fikile Mbalula, and his department have proposed to spend R463 million on

“consultants and business advisory services”, which is up from R381 million in the previous financial year.

We can only guess which cadres are going to be at the receiving end of this windfall, to the detriment of all South Africans. This amount, close to half a billion rand, should instead be used to maintain existing rail infrastructure.

Chairperson,

Another dream that has been shattered, is the Moloto Railway Corridor. The DoT has no funded plan whatsoever to implement this project. The Moloto Railway Corridor was nothing but a pipe dream.

While Minister Mbalula sells pipe dreams to the people, his department chose to channel R463 million via the express gravy train corridor for consultations, despite a Cabinet resolution to reduce the spending on such consultants.

Chairperson,

Another nightmare in this regime of dreams continues to be e-Tolls. The Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project (GFIP) continues to haunt the citizens of Gauteng. The truth is that the ANC uses e-Tolls for political expediency, and to play on the emotions of all Gauteng residents, especially during election campaigning time.

It is time to do the right thing and take decisive action to scrap e-Tolls.

The APP of the DoT further notes that SANRAL has shifted money meant for critical maintenance of the non-toll road network to the unsustainable GFIP. The state of our Provincial and National roads is complete decay. Our roads have left our citizens prone to more accidents, with a loss of lives on a regular basis - yet the department takes away money meant to service roads in Mpumalanga, North West, the Free State, Limpopo, Eastern Cape and the Northern Cape, just to fund the failing e-Toll system.

This nonsense must end and we must urgently shift our focus to maintaining our Provincial and National roads.

Chairperson,

In closing, it is worth noting that of all the thirteen cities that are implementing the Bus Rapid Transit system, four of them are all DA-led municipalities – this includes but is not limited to George, the City of Johannesburg, Tshwane and the City of Cape Town.

That is the DA difference. We put the interests of all South Africans first.

Ngiyathokoza, Bayede.