

SPEECH

Speech - Tabling of Annual Reports of the Department of Roads and Transport in the Gauteng Legislature, 4 September 2018

Madam Speaker

It my pleasure to table in the House the 2017/18 Annual Reports of the Department of Roads and Transport, gFleet and the Gautrain Management Agency (GMA). These Reports present a snapshot of the activities and programmes of the Department, including its achievements and challenges, during the period under review.

Gauteng citizens hold us accountable for the state of public transport; subsidised bus services; the condition of our paved road network as well as the frontline services we provide through the Driving License Testing Centres. The Annual Reports provide an instrument for such accountability. The central message from our side is that the Department, g-Fleet and the GMA are on track in fulfilling their public mandates and achieving their predetermined objectives.

The National Development Plan (2030) positions the capable state as the catalyst and determinant to achieve a high growth rate for South Africa and to build a prosperous society that is inclusive and equitable. It is within this context that the Department fulfils its mandate by ensuring that its staff continue to develop its managerial and leadership capabilities to build our road and public transport infrastructure to grow the economy and create jobs.

In this regard we are honoured that the Head of Department, Mr Ronald Swartz, was awarded the “Best HOD in Transport Award” by the Minister of Transport, Mr Blade Nzimande.

Technological innovations will remain a catalyst for growth and development in the transport sector. The Department is fully cognizant that we are operating in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and that our leadership should put us at the forefront of this phenomena for the greater good of our province. In this regard we are excited about our partnership with the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC). The relationship enabled the launching last week of a technological platform that allows for:

- Online pre-booking for learner and driving license appointments; and
- Online booking for the renewal of driving license cards.

The new online booking system has several advantages for the residents of Gauteng. It reduces the waiting times at the Driving License Testing Centres (DLTCs). We know that currently people wait between 4-6 hours, if not more, to get through the process of applying for a learner’s or driver’s license, or to renew their driving licenses. The process is tedious, frustrating and tiring. Also, there are reports of people bribing queue marshals to jump queues, or paying others to stand in the queue on their behalf. Online pre-booking will eliminate these problems. Secondly, it allows for personal flexibility, choice and convenience. An applicant can choose an appropriate date, time and place for conducting the various testing functions. Thirdly, the online service will reduce the possibility for corrupt practices. We have in the past received allegations of applicants bribing officials to receive preferential treatment at DLTCs. This can now be eliminated. Lastly, the online booking service will impact positively on the actual operations at DLTCs. It will enable Centre Managers to better manage work flows and instill greater efficiencies at DLTCs.

The reports we have received since last Thursday from the RTMC show that there is a very positive response from the public to the online booking system. A total of 663 out of 3128 persons have pre-booked on the system, which shows a 21 percent uptake over three days since the system went live.

The interesting fact is that we have had high interest in the online booking system from areas such as Kliptown, Tembisa and Mabopane. I have no doubt that this technological solution will have a very positive impact on reducing waiting times at the DLTCs.

Road and public transport infrastructure stimulate economic growth and development. It helps to link economically and socially the metropolitan cities and district municipalities of the Gauteng City Region. The planned Gautrain II expansion will be a major catalyst for further economic growth, social development and job creation along its proposed corridors. Together with the Bus Rapid Transit systems, it will spatially integrate the five development corridors in our province. Mutually beneficial partnerships between government and the private sector will continue to give traction to the building of new road and rail corridors in Gauteng. Such partnerships foster alignment and harmonisation of land use and transport.

The Infrastructure Report by the South African Institute of Civil Engineering (SAICE) for 2017, shows that our provincial road network has improved. It is gratifying that 71 percent of Gauteng's paved network has been rated in the "fair to very good" categories. This shows that the proactive approach of the Department's construction and maintenance units is yielding positive results.

Honourable Members, the Annual Reports are being tabled for your consideration and evaluation. The Department and its entities are accountable to this House. We, therefore, table the Annual Reports for oversight purposes.

Ismail Vadi

MEC for Roads and Transport