



SPEECH

To: All Media

Att: News Editors / Transport Reporters

Date: 25 July 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY GAUTENG ROADS AND TRANSPORT MEC JACOB MAMABOLO AT THE PROVINCIAL TAXI SUMMIT HELD IN THE SEDIBENG DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY - 24 JULY 2019

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

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ESTEEMED GUESTS

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I am deeply honoured and privileged to welcome you to the 2019 Gauteng Provincial Taxi Summit.

We decided to convene this summit very early in the term of the 6th Administration, effectively less than three months in office.

Just last month, Premier David Makhura delivered his excellent and memorable State of the Province Address (SOPA).

Subject to correction, this may be the first Summit convened in the early days of any administration in our province, perhaps even nationally.

Convening this Summit early give us a rare opportunity to implement the resolutions throughout the entire term.

We have been directed by Premier Makhura to submit our plans in 100 days from the date of SOPA.

Therefore, the resolutions and outcomes of this Summit will occupy a centre stage in the work of our Gauteng Provincial Government.

We have prioritised this industry because we understand it's historic and strategic importance to our economy.

Historically, the minibus taxi industry has played and continues to play a key role in the dark days of Apartheid and National oppression of our people.

When the Apartheid government neglected and deliberately denied our people access to efficient and effective modes of transport and transport infrastructure, the mini-bus taxi Industry closed the gap.

It emerged under difficult conditions to act as the pillar and backbone of the transport system of the historically oppressed people.

The minibus taxi industry has fought successful battles during the Apartheid system to become the most recognised and acknowledged as the biggest mode of transport, not only in our province, but nationally.

As we meet here today, it is reported that the minibus taxi industry transports sixty-seven percent (67%) of commuters nationally, but receives estimated at R1 per passenger trip - the lowest form of financial support from government.

The Taxi industry is followed by Metrorail that transports about twenty-one percent (21%) and receives R35 per passenger trip.

This is followed by buses that transport eight percent (8%), with the Bus Rapid Transport system transporting two percent (2%) but receiving almost R200 per passenger trip. According to these figures, we have an anomaly that as government we provide little support to the industry that, beyond any shadow of doubt, constitutes the core and backbone of our transport system.

It is therefore critical that we appreciate the strategic importance of this industry to the economy of our province and as an initiative of our people.

It is an industry we must embrace and be proud of.

It is only by adopting a positive attitude towards this industry that we can, true to the theme of this summit: Growing the Gauteng Economy through Modernisation of the Taxi Industry.

Programme Director, allow me to share with you some of the profound and critical elements of the Modernisation of the Minibus Taxi Industry:

- 1) Immediately bring to an end 'Taxi Wars' that are ravaging the Taxi industry. This we will do by getting the support of the key players, especially the Taxi Associations to embed a two pronged approach.

In the first instance, we need law enforcement agencies and the judiciary to act decisively on crimes committed in the Taxi Industry.

Secondly, we need to investigate the root cause of the murder rate in the industry so that we can attend to the real, and not assumed, causes by making the industry efficient and effective.

In this regard, we must look at the governance of the industry, especially its informal and self-regulating nature.

We need to know the statistical facts about the identity of the operators and workers in the province.

We need to look at the Governance of the Taxi Associations and their leadership. In other words, we need traditional and non-traditional forms of interventions.

We cannot just rely on law enforcement and the judicial process alone. This is not working and we need to change.

2) We must bring to an immediate end the alleged high levels of corruption, maladministration and toxic management practices in the issuance of Operating Permits.

This requires a proper audit of who the permits have been issued to, and the routes on which they are issued.

We need to have full control in this area. It is apparently one of the biggest factors that account for the overall mismanagement of this industry.

We need to clean this area of our work. I have received numerous complains that this is the critical factor that requires urgent attention.

We need reliable, accurate and consistent data to prepare for the taxi subsidy so that anytime a decision is taken, we are ready and it is all systems go.

3) We must urgently introduce modern and advanced smart technologies to run and manage this sector. Such interventions will include using smart technologies to integrate this industry into other modes of transport.

For example, we need to have technologies to integrate Taxis with buses, Metrorail, Gautrain and BRT's. We need commuters to have real time information about the location and operating hours of each taxi rank.

4) We need to urgently introduce best business practices and principles in the minibus taxi industry.

The first step is to introduce training and re-skilling of the participants in the industry.

We need training for leaders in this industry so that they embrace business management skills and eliminate the use of violence to resolve conflict.

We need taxi leaders who understand how they are affected by business cycles such as recession, depression as well as the impact that these economic factors have on the movement of people.

5) We need operators and drivers to be trained in road safety, customer service and interpersonal skills. We need to do away with the current bad practices that alienates people from taxis.

We need to explore the concept of a Taxi Academy in our province that can issue accredited certificates and qualifications to taxi drivers, and the leaders of the associations.

They need to understand our country's constitution and the Bill of Rights. We need to train taxi operators and drivers to respect of the most vulnerable people in our society, the elderly, women, children and people with disability.

Proper training on co-operatives can improve participation of taxi operators in the management and governance of Taxi Ranks.

We need to think about widows and children of people killed in the industry.

Bad driving methods, taxi wars and poor conditions of vehicles are three culprits that contribute immensely to what may be called the funeral economy. This is an economy that thrives on death of others, from assassinations, negligent driving and the poor condition of vehicles, benefiting people that live and survive by death of other people.

The biggest contributors to these problems are in the taxi industry. We need to end this immediately and end it now.

6) Another area of great improvement is to improve the working conditions of taxi drivers as workers and ensure that they can grow and have a profession in the industry.

This is critical if we are to stabilise this industry in the sector.

Ladies and Gentleman, in order to modernise the taxi Industry, we need your unity as an industry and as associations.

Your unity is critical and is what will determine the success or failure to modernise the taxi industry.

It is difficult to work with people in the same space that do not share a vision, that have created an impression that the language they can speak is that of violence.

Unity does not mean you should not have differences, but it means you must value your shared perspective and elevate it above your hatred or differences.

Because of your differences, it is difficult for potential investors, business and government to work with you when you have created an impression that you are a violence-prone industry.

It is important that you unite, isolate those who divide you and protect each other.

I am saying your unity is critical because Gauteng is the leading economic hub of our country.

It contributes immensely to economic growth.

It has the biggest and fast growing population.

This therefore means the market and demand for your service is huge.

Your industry is operating far below its capacity because people fear you.

We need to work together to change the fear that people have about this strategic industry.

Transport has a huge opportunity to turnaround the economy of our province.

The cake is big enough for everybody, but what we need is to work together.

We have transport infrastructure that requires expansion and maintenance, and this has massive opportunities to expand your business opportunities.

Your supply value chain in the automotive sector offers great opportunities, but as long as you have infighting and divisions, you scare away big business opportunities.

Your unity is your strength and your divisions weaken you and take you back.

Our country has thrived through unity, and Tata Nelson Mandela has lead by example.

We have circulated resolutions of the last Summit and we are definitely Not reinventing the wheel, but seeking to build on existing resolutions.

I will set up a Taxi Monitoring Team with the leaders of the taxi industry to ensure that we monitor the implementation of the resolutions.

I am definitely sure that we will make a positive impact on the taxi industry as we seek to modernise the taxi industry and to take it to the next level.

Thank you.

ENDS!

For more information, contact the Department of Roads and Transport's Theo Nkonki on 082 719 6404 or Melitah Madiba on 073 644 9935

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