

# **INPUTS OF SANCO MPUMALANGA TO THE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT HELD ON THE 10 JULY 2018, PRESENTED BY THE PROVINCIAL SECRETARY, MIKE SOKO**

## **1. Historic Context**

- 1.1. A journal article by Thomas (2016) states that passenger transport under apartheid, and white minority rule before and during apartheid, was a crucial site of contestation and popular protest. The South African passenger transportation system largely designed for daily transportation of labour to and from the workplace.
- 1.2. This often involved transporting Africans from the fringes of urban centres into the cities, based on the racially segregated nature of minority rule. Furthermore, transport became a site of popular struggles and a dramatic expression of tensions and disputes over control, management and affordability of racially divided spaces (Thomas, 2016).
- 1.3. The transition to a new attitude regarding transportation in South Africa began around 1994 with the formation of the National Transport Policy Forum (NTPF), which brought the broader civic movements and other formations together. At the time, the ANC considered transportation as a transformation issue.
- 1.4. In 1998, the government formulated a new document entitled Moving South Africa Forward (MSA): Toward a Transport Strategy for 2020. This means somewhere in the archives there was a plan developed with solutions addressing the issue at hand.
- 1.5. SANCO thought it was important that we elevate this abridged historical context of the public transport issue in South Africa.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. There are a number of benefits associated with the public transport. Public transport is essential to creating and growing competitive economies. Effective public transport can help to alleviate poverty and reduce household spending.
- 2.2. Effective and efficient public transport can yield positive impact on environmental issues in reducing both carbon emissions and fuel consumption, by reducing the number of cars on the road travelling at once.
- 2.3. When black people were disposed from their land, the authorities and the apartheid system did not consider the importance for black people to travel and commute from one area to another –industrial areas became a priority. *There is a high connectedness between the debate on the land and the discussion on the public transport.*
- 2.4. SANCO envisage the public transport that is **safe, reliable** and **cost-effective**.
  1. The **safety** aspect embodies issues of **security**, the **state of the vehicles** and **attitude of drivers**.
  2. The **reliability** aspects covers matters related to the **effectiveness and efficiency** of the public transport.
  3. The **cost-effectiveness** does not only relate to the **price aspect**, but the **value for the money** that customers spend on public transport.

## 3. Public Transport Challenges in Mpumalanga

- 3.1. The use of public transport is very expensive in Mpumalanga. SANCO appreciates that Ehlanzeni Region is much better when compared with other Regions, like Nkangala and Gert Sibande. The availability of the bus services offered by Buscor eases the pressure and stress of using public transport.

- 3.2. The use public transport in Mpumalanga comes with a number of challenges like in other regions of the country. Most of these challenges are common from one province to another and from one region to another. This includes the issues of costs, security, waiting time, the state of vehicles, the attitude of drivers, etc.
- 3.3. Mthimkhulu (2017) estimated that households spend at least 2/3 (two-third) of their income on transportation. SANCO Mpumalanga will not discuss the obvious issues but want to raise the subsequent issues for the consideration of the Commission.

#### **4. Forced Migration**

- 4.1. The unavailability of affordable public transport force people to migrate to areas nearer to their areas of work. The case-in-point in this regard is, but not limited to Mbombela, the Province's Capital City. The availability of the safe and affordable buses in Ehlanzeni makes travelling much easier in Ehlanzeni compared to other Regions.
- 4.2. For instance, a person from Gert Sibande and Nkangala Region staying 105 KM away from Nelspruit is forced to stay in Nelspruit. However, a person staying 105 KM away from Nelspruit staying around Ehlanzeni Region has a choice to either stay at home or move to Nelspruit.
  - 4.2.1. The above has the cost element. Most people end up using money that could be used to uplift their families' social and economic status on rental, water and lights.
- 4.3. The distance from Tonga (Nkomazi in Ehlanzeni) to Nelspruit is 105 KM; the distance from Emanzana (Chief Albert Luthuli in Gert Sibande Region) to Nelspruit is 115 KM; and the distance from Marchadodorp (Emakhazeni in Nkangala) to Nelspruit is 103 KM. However, workers from Emanzana and Marchadodorp cannot afford to travel to Nelspruit daily.

- 4.4. Therefore, this means that the unavailability of effective, efficient and affordable public transport yields negative social impact for families because the situation may force parents to leave away from their children and see them on weekends and to some extent when the month ends.

## **5. Daily Cross Border Movements**

- 5.1. The sad story of the Mloto Road and the magnitude of accidents is known nationally, and government can tell it better than we can because it has sanctioned a number of studies in that regard. The Mloto Corridor paints the general challenge encountered by our communities when transiting from one province to another.
- 5.2. Mpumalanga shares borders with four provinces: Limpopo, Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, and Free State (around Lekwa). Mpumalanga shares borders with two countries: Kingdom of eSwatini and Republic of Mozambique. This necessitates the need for efficient, effective and affordable public transport because our communities transit from one province to another and from one country to another on daily bases.
- 5.3. It is extremely difficult to find public transport at all the border gates, let alone finding an effective, efficient and affordable transport. As such, our people spend hours at the holding spots and end up using whatever transport available, regardless of the safety and the cost of travelling.

## **6. Taxi Ranks**

- 6.1. Taxi ranks are essential and central in the transformation of the public transport system. It is a fact that most people do not appreciate or enjoy using taxi ranks but they do not have a choice. For most commuters, taxi ranks are the place of trauma and horror.

- 6.2. Most taxi ranks in the Province were built in the 1990's without public amenities and are not suitable to be used by disabled people and senior citizens. Security in the taxi rank is a night mere. Senior citizens, women, children and people with disabilities are neglected in most taxi ranks.
- 6.3. The general customer service at the taxi ranks is in shambles at most (if not all) taxi ranks, because it is assumed that anyone and everyone can work at the taxi rank. If the condition of the taxi ranks was welcoming (both in terms of the infrastructure, security and the customer service), using public transport would be less traumatic.
- 6.4. It is for this reason that most people opt to use hiking spots, which causes conflict between the taxi associations and private owners of vehicles that would pick up hiking commuters.
- 6.5. SANCO in Mpumalanga believes that the transformation the public transport system in South Africa would not be a success without the transformation of the taxi ranks. In 2016, the estimate was that 67% of the population using public transport in South Africa utilise taxis.
- 6.6. The above therefore unequivocally place the centrality of the taxi ranks at the top of the agenda of the transformation of the public transport system.

## **7. Recommendations**

SANCO in Mpumalanga advances the following recommendations as endeavours to improve the public transport system in Province:

- 7.1. Government must conduct a research on the impact of the unavailability of efficient, effective and affordable public transport by looking at the various points raised above, especially forced migration.
- 7.2. Government must design a flexible intermodal public transport system that would make it easy for commuters to transits using the different mode of transport available. This include the consideration of building railway commuter lines to Mbombela from Gert Sibande and Nkangala Region, without disadvantaging the taxi industry.
- 7.3. Government must consider an equitable system that will subsidies both the bus and taxi industry. SANCO MP is of the view that it is extremely unfair that while both the bus and taxi industry serve the poor but only bus companies are subsidised. For starters, the taxis can be subsidised through cost rebates on annual permits and other NATIS related costs.
- 7.4. Government through the Public Works Department should reconsider building new taxi ranks or revamping the current existing ones, especially in the new highly populated areas. The architecture of the taxi ranks must take the modern approach as opposed to the conservative structures, given the limited availability of space. An area like Msholozhi (in Mbombela) really deserve a taxi rank of some sort.
- 7.5. The Department of Transport should establish compulsory minimum norms and standards for all taxi ranks in South Africa. These norms and standards should capture aspects from the availability of public amenities, customer service and security issues.

- 7.6. The Community Safety Department must always deploy dedicated police officials to patrol at the highly populated taxi ranks to minimise the level of crime at the taxi ranks. This will surely make the use of taxi ranks much easier and the use of public transport more considerable.
- 7.7. Government, through the Department of Government Communications should develop fliers and pamphlets written in all 11 languages to educate (advocacy and awareness) those working at the taxi ranks on their obligations and the rights of commuters.
- 7.8. The Corporative Governance and Traditional Affairs Department must ensure that the municipalities' spatial plans integrates public routes and set land aside to build or expand taxi ranks.