



transport

Department:
Transport
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**MINISTER'S SPEAKING NOTES ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING
WITH THE GEORGE COMMUNITY FORUM AND UNCEDO TAXI
ASSOCIATION TO DECLARE THE RESUMPTION OF GO-GEORGE
PROJECT ON 11 FEBRUARY 2020 AT THE GEORGE COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Provincial Minister of Transport, Bonginkosi Madikizela

Executive Mayor of George Municipality, Councillor Melvin Naik

Leadership of Uncedo Taxi Association

Leadership of the George Community Forum

Government Officials

We are back in George to formally conclude a process of engagement, where we sought to find each other in resolving challenges confronting the Go George project. It is rather unfortunate that it has taken us this long to reach a point, where we can resume with delivering a crucial public transport service to our people.

It is fitting that we hold this meeting on the 30th anniversary of the release of the founding father of our democracy, an icon of our liberation struggle and a giant of our revolution, Tata Nelson Mandela.

The values that he embodied remain the pillars of our democracy and we all have a duty to uphold and emulate these values in our work. Selfless

commitment to service to the people must trump all else. It can never be, that narrow self-serving interests define our approach to service delivery to the extent that we accept that when we do not get our way, the people must suffer. This is not what Tata Nelson Mandela and those who sacrificed their lives so we could be free, stood for.

Go George is about delivering a public transport solution that not only advances our commitment to enabling seamless mobility, but also about leveraging government investment to empower our people. Ours is to ensure that the people are the main beneficiaries of this project. The agreement we are christening today must be about that, and nothing else.

At the heart of the demands that brought this project to a halt is the question of whether the taxi industry is getting the promised empowerment, or they are getting a raw deal. We had to separate fact from fiction in understanding the real state of affairs, which included conducting a survey to determine demand and supply.

Government made an unwavering commitment that the roll-out of Integrated Public Transport Networks must integrate and empower the taxi industry. We reiterate our commitment that these projects, including Go George, must not leave the industry worse off.

Their empowerment must include enabling their participation in the mainstream economy, broadening their revenue base and diversifying their

business. We can only realise these benefits with the full roll-out of the project, and through effective collaboration.

The delay in the roll-out of Phase 4 of this Project was further compounded by the fact that the state of the road infrastructure in Thembaletu, meant that immediate roll-out would mean worsening congestion. The splintering of Phase 4 into 4a and 4b was premised on this consideration.

Government is firmly committed to ensuring that the residents of Thembaletu fully benefit from the roll-out of the Go George project. It is on that basis that the National Department of Transport has committed to raising the necessary funding for the construction of the Nelson Mandela bridge. SANRAL will be given the necessary mandate to construct this bridge as soon as possible. We are working hard to ensure that all funding issues are finalized by the end of March 2020, so we can get on with the business of constructing the bridge.

Demands were made for the issue of operating licenses to illegal operators. Government cannot and will not condone lawlessness.

The law requires that before anyone can undertake a taxi service, they must be in possession of an operating license.

We agreed to consider each case on its own merits informed by the reality that the moratorium imposed by the municipality and the time lapse since the last survey, may have created a blind spot in the determination of

demand and supply. It was on this basis that the Municipality looked into the matter and made recommendations to the Provincial Regulatory Entity (PRE).

However, I must hasten to add that this cannot be a benefit exclusively reserved for Uncedo operators. Ours is a democracy founded on human rights, and therefore any operator who meets the criteria prescribed in law, must have an equal opportunity to apply for an operating license.

Equally, any unreasonable attempts to eliminate competition to Go George, cannot be encouraged, as these may go against the grain of the law.

However, those who choose to surrender their operating licenses to become shareholders in the operating company, George Link, cannot expect to also operate in competition to the service.

It is only those who choose to forgo participation in the Go George project who will be allowed to retain their operating licenses and continue operating on the affected routes.

Calls were made for a forensic investigation into the matters raised in the Brasika report. A number of authorities have looked into the allegations raised in the report. We are also advised that the Western Cape Provincial Minister of Local Government is looking into the matters raised in that report and will make his own determination.

I must hasten to add that we are firmly committed to rooting out corruption wherever it occurs and in all its manifestations. We have independently initiated a process to evaluate the contents of this report and familiarize ourselves with the conclusions of all the authorities that have reviewed the same.

I must assure you that to the extent that any allegation raised in that report has not been looked into by the relevant authorities, we will not hesitate to investigate and ensure that the law takes its course, where there is evidence of wrong-doing.

Our resolve to ensuring that any allegation of fraud, corruption or any other form of malfeasance is investigated and dealt with in line with the law, is unshakeable.

Value chain opportunities remain a source of ongoing engagements. We have agreed to establish a joint Task Team to look into these matters.

The guiding principle that must underpin the work of the Task Team must be to ensure that the value chain opportunities identified must result in meaningful benefit and empowerment for the industry and the community.

Gone are the days when our people are used as cannon fodder in developmental initiatives, where they are simply used as the face of empowerment while the real beneficiaries remain in the shadows living like fat cats.

The people of George in general, and Themba lethu in particular, must be the real beneficiaries of the Go George initiative. This must also find expression in their participation and benefit from the business of George Link.

It is therefore my singular honour to welcome the resolution of this matter and thank all the parties involved for demonstrating leadership and commitment to delivering a better public transport solution to the people of George.

While the substantive agreement has been signed by the Accounting Officers in the three spheres of government and other officials, we will formally append our signatures as political principals as a token of our commitment to the spirit and the letter of the Agreements signed and a declaration for the resumption of the project.

I thank you.

Enquiries: Ayanda-Allie Paine

Cell: +27 74 823 7979

Twitter: @AyandaAllieP

Email: ayandapaine@gmail.com