

Address by the Deputy Minister of Transport, Mr. Mkhuleko Hlengwa during the Cross-Border Passenger Transport Law Enforcement Workshop held at the Indaba Hotel in Fourways, Johannesburg on 21 July 2026

The Chairperson and Members of the C-BRTA Board of Directors,

The CEO and Management Team of the C-BRTA,

The cross-border passenger road transport bus operators,

Representatives from the Department of Transport and DOT Entities,

Representatives from various Provincial and Local Governments Authorities,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning!

Introduction

It is an honour for me to address this gathering of esteemed delegates - the men and women who play an important role of transporting passengers across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

On behalf of the Department of Transport, it gives me great pleasure to be part of this occasion which seeks to address some of the difficult challenges which we collectively face as stakeholders in the entire cross-border road transport value chain. In this room, we have the cross-border passenger road transport bus operators who play an important role of transporting passengers across the borders. We also have the Cross-Border Road Transport Agency (C-BRTA) and other Government partners who, collectively, have a responsibility to ensure the smooth flow of passengers and goods between South Africa and its neighbouring countries. As stakeholders in the facilitation and transportation of passengers in the region, we have one goal, which is to ensure viable and efficient cross-border road transport operations.

The importance of road safety in the Cross-border road transport industry

Ladies and gentlemen, as partners in the business of moving multitudes of people across borders every year, we have a bigger responsibility of ensuring that we do this

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in a safe manner. South Africa is plagued with the scourge of fatalities as a result of avoidable road accidents due to non-adherence to the rules of the road-by-road users. Furthermore, in recent times, our country has experienced an increase in road accidents and fatalities caused by cross-border buses, including those from our neighbouring states, on South African roads.

On a weekly basis through the Transport MINMEC, a structure of all Transport MEC, The Hon Minister and myself as Deputy Minister, we receive reports from all our Provinces on the status of traffic movements, deployments by law enforcement, and the voracious investments by made by our provincial and national transport authorities aimed at ensuring safer roads and the reduction of crashes and fatalities. These weekly sessions are a demonstration of our collective commitment to the reduction of deaths on our roads across the country.

Whilst we acknowledge the reduction in crashes and fatalities over the last 5years, we realise the enormity of the task that lies ahead. As part of the Decade of Action's aims of reducing fatalities by 50 per cent in 2030, the South African government, through the Department of Transport is investing in all means possible to contribute to the reduction of fatalities in our roads.

The Bus sector, and in this context, the cross-border bus sector, is a vital component of economic architecture, responsible for moving millions of passengers between our country and the rest of the Region and vice versa. The passengers are moved for a variety of purposes, including job opportunities, vacations, family visits, tourism and many more. At the very least, the expectation from all of us is that these movements must be carried in a safe manner that guarantees the safe arrival of all passengers at their destinations.

At a high level, our analysis of the of recent accidents that we have seen in the cross-border environment points to certain factors that I need to highlight

- A) Overloading of buses that are travelling long distances
- B) Unroadworthy vehicles
- C) Fatigued drivers that drive long distances with minimal relief of none

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- D) Buses that are loading more goods than intended, contributing to the buses being unstable on the roads
- E) Driving at excessive speeds, and
- F) Drivers that are not properly licensed to drive such heavy vehicles

These factors have also been confirmed through various joint law enforcement operations around the country. The N1 remains the busiest corridor for Bus passengers destined to countries across our borders. Over the past few months both the National Traffic Police of our RTMC (Road Traffic Management Cooperation) and RTI officers from C-BRTA, led a prolonged joint law enforcement operation on the N1, specifically at the Baobab Toll Gate. The number of discontinued vehicles, fines and arrests support some of the factors raised above.

Whilst this list is not exhaustive, it is a reflection of the most common challenges that we have identified as contributing to the crashes we have seen in recent months and they remain a cause for concern not only for the Transport family but for the entire government system, our country and the rest of the Region. A loss of a single life is one too many. The reality is that these deaths deprive families of their breadwinners, their children and valuable loved ones who ensure livelihood of their homesteads.

So, in gathering here today, we all realise the urgent need for all of us to continue the effort of ensuring safer roads, with a massive reduction in crashes and deaths. It would also be remiss of me not to emphasise that it is our collective responsibility, as government and the private sector, to improve safety on our roads and all of us have an equal role to play. Whilst government regulates and enforces, it can only succeed through collaborative efforts with road users. Therefore, I appeal to you to make sure that you do all within your means to ensure safer roads. Vehicles must be roadworthy, not overloaded and we ask you to manage the health and wellness of your drivers by ensuring that they take regular intervals of resting to avoid fatigue.

From a Transport perspective, we are doing all we can to assist with the cross-border bus industry, particularly re-looking at the timetables for the bus movements across the borders. We are aware that this is one of the major issues that the industry has raised. Through the C-BRTA, we have also made permits to be easily accessible through the online platforms, and the verification of permits is also done through

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various technological tools on the roads by our law enforcement officers. There are more areas of improvement being planned for implementation over the course of the next few months.

I also request that you support and partner with the C-BRTA in its resolve to implement its recently launched Operator Compliance Accreditation System (OCAS) which is an intelligent risk-based road safety tool for certifying and licensing compliant commercial road transport operators. OCAS is founded on the basis of safety management systems as championed in the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety. I urge you to support the Agency in further improving, implementing and championing this important tool aimed at addressing our road safety challenge, with specific focus on the cross-border road transport industry.

The status quo and need to ensure safer corridors in the SADC region

Ladies and gentlemen

Our pre-occupation with the road safety is not only about our country, our region, but an effort to contribute to a positive global picture in as far as road safety is concerned. The latest statistics on road crash fatalities worldwide are alarming, with approximately 1.19 million deaths occurring annually, which translates to around 3,200 deaths daily. This number represents a slight decrease from previous years, but still, road traffic crashes remain the leading cause of death among children and youth aged 5-29 years.

In South Africa, the economic burden of road fatalities is substantial, with estimated annual costs of R164 billion, exceeding the international benchmark. These funds could be redirected towards vital projects like infrastructure development, road rehabilitation, and poverty alleviation. To mitigate the scourge of road crashes, concerted efforts are necessary to enhance road safety and prioritize the well-being of all road users.

Ladies and gentlemen, this reality is a call to action. As different stakeholders who have an important role to play in ensuring the safe transportation of people in South Africa and across the region at large, we cannot let the status quo remain. It is our collective responsibility to put measure in place to reduce road crashes and fatalities.

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It is for this reason that we must place road safety at the top of agenda as you conduct your business of moving passengers across borders and into the region.

Purpose of the workshop

Ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here today as part of this Law Enforcement Workshop to discuss and address the challenges that the cross-border passenger road bus transport operators face when doing business along the corridors which lead to various countries in the SADC region. To do this, it is important to understand the purpose of this workshop. Today's session is a culmination of constant engagements between the operators and the C-BRTA on critical issues which affect the cross-border road transport industry. To this end, this workshop has been convened to serve as a platform to discuss the law enforcement challenges as well as to come up with the required solutions to the identified problems. To this effect, the workshop aims to:

- Provide a structured platform for engagement between the cross-border bus industry and relevant law enforcement agencies.
- Clarify the legislative mandates, powers, and responsibilities of the various enforcement institutions operating within the cross-border transport environment.
- Discuss operational challenges affecting scheduled cross-border passenger transport services, particularly the Bus industry.
- Promote collaboration between government institutions and industry stakeholders.
- Identify practical interventions that will improve compliance and road safety concerns while minimising unnecessary operational disruptions.
- Strengthen confidence and trust between government and the cross-border passenger transport industry.
- Examine how joint efforts between Law Enforcement Agencies and the Bus Industry will contribute to Road safety and safer roads.

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With these issues in mind, I would like to call upon everyone here today to set their sights on resolving the issues at hand by developing a comprehensive mitigating strategic plan to remedy these challenges, which should cover the following aspects:

- Development of an Action Plan to address concerns raised.
- Development of an intelligence plan to inform and drive law enforcement deployment plans.

Ladies and gentlemen, given this overview, I would like to call upon all stakeholders present today to join hands and exchange ideas on how to tackle the law enforcement challenges which are a major issue of concern to the operators. We are a government that listens and, it goes without saying that engagement platforms such as this one, will go a long way in resolving the challenges which are presented by the cross-border road transport industry. I am happy that the C-BRTA invited other government partners, mainly law enforcement authorities, to adopt a collective approach towards resolving the identified challenges.

This shows our commitment to the cause, and I believe that we can only achieve our goals when we work together, as opposed to working against each other.

Let me wish you all successful session, and I hope to receive positive feedback with a clear action plan on how to take the cross-border road transport industry forward.

I thank you!