



**MINISTRY
TRANSPORT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**MINISTER BARBARA CREEECY SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE DEBATE ON THE
PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS**

18 February 2026

Honourable Speaker, Mr President, fellow members, this year we celebrate our democratic constitution which 30 years ago, President Nelson Mandela signed into law.

Our Constitution requires government to pursue transformation policies that meet people's socio-economic needs and redress the injustices and inequalities created by colonialism, apartheid, and patriarchy, so that we continuously strive to "improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person."

An effective and efficient transport and logistics system is fundamental to meeting our society's socio-economic needs. Our country's transport system must preserve and facilitate job creation; promote inclusive

economic growth and ensure the affordable, safe and timely movement of both people and goods.

Across the world and indeed on our own continent new forces are shaping the transport and logistics sector. The uncertain geopolitical context offers both new opportunities and risks.

New rail infrastructure corridors and port upgrades in the SADC region offer new regionalised trade routes for Southern Africa.

Decarbonisation, digitisation and eCommerce are driving a technological revolution which we must embrace and join, we cannot be left behind!

Accordingly, transport sector reform in our own country is an urgent imperative! There is little time to delay!

The National Rail Policy of South Africa aims to position the rail sector as the backbone of the transport value chain. Trucking, buses and taxis will always play a significant role in an integrated transport system ensuring rapid first mile, and last mile movement of both people and goods.

In this coming year we will release for public comment the National Rail Masterplan to give expression to our long term vision for the role of rail, both passenger and freight, in a modern transport and logistics system.

The Roadmap for The Freight Logistics System in South Africa clarifies that strategic infrastructure such as rail lines and ports will remain in public ownership, as assets belonging to the South African people.

To this end we must assure the country that we will do all within our power to rebuild and modernise the capabilities, operational effectiveness and competitiveness of our state-owned freight logistics operator.

In November last year the budget facility for infrastructure allocated over R8 billion rand for accelerated maintenance on the iron ore and coal freight lines. Additional requests for upgrades to our other priority corridors will be submitted this year.

Last year we took important steps in our rail reform journey.

Our third-party access framework is anchored by the Transnet Rail Infrastructure Manager (TRIM), which was established in late 2024.

The TRIM published its First Network Statement together with the Rail Access Tariff on 20th December 2024. This milestone provided the industry with an opportunity to have complete information about the state of the entire rail network.

We are on course to publish the Second Network Statement that will give industry more information on tender rights, the penalty regime, and service standards.

In the new financial year we will formally establish the Transport Economic Regulator so that going forward port and rail fees are independently determined to ensure a level playing field for all operators.

To date TRIM has conditionally awarded train slots covering 24 million tons per annum to 11 Train Operating Companies We expect the first operator to start operations on 1 April 2027.

New short haul operators will start on the Container Corridor as early as April this year!

Open access to the rail network will allow train operating companies to increase the volume of goods transported by rail.

This will ensure that South African minerals, vehicles and agricultural produce reach SADC, African and International markets, securing jobs and earning much needed revenue for our fiscus.

The Railway Safety Regulator is currently implementing the new Railway Safety Act to ensure rail safety standards are equally upheld by all rail operators.

There are limited state resources to upgrade our rail network. This makes private- sector infrastructure investment critical.

Transnet is working hard to ensure they draw up Request for Proposal (RFP) documents, based on the RFI we received last year.

As things stand, the targeted RFP timelines are as follows:

- Richards Bay Dry Bulk Terminal – this month
- Manganese Corridor – mid year
- Container Corridor – towards the end of 2026.

To decrease backlogs and increase port volumes, Transnet has embarked on an extensive upgrading and maintenance programme: procuring new equipment, engaging OEMs to source spare parts. This has increased port tonnage to 252 million tons compared with 239 million tons last year.

In the passenger rail space, the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) is restoring routes, introducing more than 300 locally manufactured modern train sets. We will ensure passenger rail is a safe, affordable, reliable, and dignified transport option for our people.

PRASA has successfully revived 37 out of 40 corridors and the agency is on track to achieve 106 million passenger journeys for this financial year.

Signalling remains the single most important factor in improving passenger rail numbers. National Treasury has given PRASA a significant financial allocation over the medium term to restore signalling. We are currently taking advice on ways to safely increase hourly train slots under current conditions.

On 1 September we launched a Request for Information (RFI) for passenger rail, to assess the appetite for investment in commuter rail. Specifically included here is rapid regional rail between Gauteng, Musina, Mbombela and eThekweni.

Mr President it is our wish to find a financially sustainable, and affordable model to enable us to re-introduce rapid long distance rail. It's a difficult

task, you have given us. But we will spare no effort because we are convinced many citizens would find regional rail more convenient.

SANRAL is responsible for thirty one thousand km of our road network which carries 34% of all annual vehicle traffic, and 70% of all long-distance freight.

The entity has a number of large scale infrastructure projects that include the R573 Moloto road upgrade, a route that traverses three provinces, the N2/NZ3 upgrade in KwaZulu-Natal, and the Huguenot Tunnel upgrade.

Apart from improving safety, reducing congestion and improving connectivity across the country, these large scale projects created over 35 000 job opportunities, and provided support to over 2000 SMMEs last year.

Of serious concern is inadequate capacity for road construction and maintenance at a provincial and local government level. This has led provincial governments to transfer 1300 kilometers of road to SANRAL for management and maintenance.

To support sub national government we have introduced clear, uniform standards for road maintenance and upgrades. We are encouraging all provincial departments to acquire yellow fleet so they can engage in their own minor road works on a regular basis.

We have established a SALGA road maintenance working group to make sure that municipalities spend on road maintenance and address the condition of municipal roads.

SANRAL will re-prioritise budgets to address flood damage to national roads in Mpumalanga and Limpopo. We have asked National Treasury to support provinces facing extensive flood damage to their road infrastructure.

Mr President, we have indeed turned a corner. Reforms in the transport sector are moving with speed!

I thank you