



MINISTRY
TRANSPORT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT,
MS BARBARA CREECY, MP, MINISTERIAL OVERSIGHT VISIT AND
OFFICIAL OPENING OF REFURBISHED STATIONS
EAST LONDON RAIL CORRIDOR, EASTERN CAPE
27 OCTOBER 2026**

Programme Director;

Representatives of provincial and local government;

The Board, management and employees of PRASA;

Representatives of organised labour, community organisations and the
transport sector;

Members of the media;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be in KuGompo during October Transport Month. This year's theme calls on all of us to build a safe, sustainable, reliable and affordable

transport system. This morning offers a chance to see what that commitment looks like on the ground.

We are here for two reasons. The first is to assess progress in restoring passenger rail services in the Eastern Cape. The second is to officially open stations that were severely vandalised during the COVID-19 hard lockdown, and which have now been rebuilt for the people who use them.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The mandate of PRASA is to provide a safe, reliable and affordable passenger rail service. Passenger rail connects communities to opportunity. It narrows the distance between where people live and where they earn a living.

Here in KuGompo, the service runs from Berlin to East London station. Trains collect commuters from villages and townships and pass through eight stations along the way to East London, where most passengers work. Every station on this line sits within the communities it serves.

We must also acknowledge the hardship that service disruption has caused. When trains were unavailable, commuters carried the cost. Alternative transport was often more expensive. Time was lost and, for some job seekers, so were opportunities. Restoring these services and rebuilding these stations is part of government's responsibility to the people of this province.

Ladies and gentlemen,

That restoration has been driven by PRASA's National Station Improvement Programme. This capital programme recovers vandalised and ageing stations and turns them into modern facilities, designed for the comfort, safety and convenience of commuters.

In the Eastern Cape, the work has been thorough. Buildings, structures and waiting shelters have been renovated. Water, sanitation, drainage and backup water supply have been restored, together with lighting and backup solar power. Platforms have been refurbished, with tactile surfaces and markings for blind and partially sighted passengers. Stations now have access control, CCTV, alarms and security monitoring, along with new signage, fire-fighting equipment, and heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

To ease the cost of travel further, PRASA has introduced park-and-ride and bicycle holding facilities at its stations.

The region has 28 stations: ten in Gqeberha and 18 in KuGompo. Over the past two financial years, PRASA has invested R115 million to upgrade ten of them. Seven are in KuGompo: Arnoldton, Fort Jackson, Mdantsane, Mount Ruth, Mtsotso, Panmure and Wilsonia. Three are in Gqeberha: De Mist, Despatch and Redhouse.

Commuters have responded. Passenger numbers rose from just over 630 000 in 2024/25 to just over 1,2 million in 2025/26, with revenue growing alongside.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This programme was designed so that its benefits would stay close to home. During construction, 171 direct employment opportunities were created, mainly for people living near the stations under upgrade. For many households in these townships and villages, that work brought a wage, new skills and a record of experience to carry into the next opportunity.

Ten Community Liaison Officers were appointed to keep residents informed and involved as the work progressed. In all, 27 small, medium and micro enterprises supported the project: 21 at the seven KuGompo stations and six in Gqeberha. Public money spent in this way circulates within the local economy, supporting suppliers, families and enterprises in the same communities the railway serves.

The role of cooperatives deserves particular recognition. Cooperatives drawn from neighbouring communities now clean and maintain the stations. In support of economic transformation and small business development, PRASA has concluded three-year agreements with five cooperatives across the region.

These agreements offer more than short-term work. They provide steady income, a basis on which small enterprises can grow, and a lasting place for local people within the station environment. A station kept by its own neighbours is cared for

in a different way. The cooperatives are, in a real sense, custodians of these facilities on behalf of the people who use them.

At stations still awaiting upgrade, the Workplace Improvement Programme continues to maintain and improve workplaces and ablution facilities for passengers and employees alike.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Reliability and punctuality matter most to passengers. For the year to date ending the second quarter, PRASA in the Eastern Cape recorded on-time performance of 94,2%. Revenue and patronage exceeded target by 77% and 40% respectively. Cancellations stood at 4,13%, better than the Annual Performance Plan target of 5%. A total of 603 train trips were run, ahead of the target of 583. These results indicate that the investment in this region is yielding returns.

Over the medium-term expenditure framework, the region projects growth of at least 30% a year in passenger numbers, train trips and revenue, together with fewer delays and cancellations. These projections are encouraging. They reflect PRASA's commitment to sustain this performance while improving the lives of commuters and communities.

Good communication is part of good service. Alongside its published timetables, PRASA keeps commuters informed through a WhatsApp group, so that passengers can make other arrangements when a disruption occurs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Safety remains central to this work. The Eastern Cape region has closed all Railway Safety Regulator improvement directives to date. In recognition of this performance, the Regulator has approved an increase in train speed on the KuGompo corridor, between Berlin and East London, from 30 to 60 kilometres an hour.

As services improve and stations are upgraded, standards must hold. Clean stations, clean trains and safe journeys cannot be compromised. The continued deployment of security personnel at stations and on board trains is therefore essential, and remains at the top of PRASA's service agenda.

Protecting the railway is also a shared task. When equipment is stolen or damaged, the consequences reach well beyond the asset. Services are disrupted, public money must be spent again, and commuters lose a service on which they depend.

These stations belong to the people of this region. They were rebuilt with public funds, by local hands, for local commuters. Communities are therefore the first and most important line of protection. Residents who live beside the line, commuters who use it each day, and the cooperatives and enterprises that work within it all see what happens at these stations. Their vigilance can prevent losses that no security deployment alone can stop.

I appeal to every community along this corridor to treat these stations as their own, to protect this public infrastructure, and to report theft and vandalism promptly. PRASA, for its part, must act decisively and in close cooperation with law enforcement and community structures.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our work is not yet finished. Eighteen stations in the Eastern Cape still await upgrades, and PRASA has a responsibility to complete them over the coming years. The longer-term goal is to restore the level of service this region enjoyed before COVID-19. The current trend suggests that this goal is within reach.

Our ambition is a railway that more people can use with confidence. That requires a dependable service today and careful planning for the demand of tomorrow.

I wish to thank the PRASA teams, organised labour, contractors, local businesses and community partners who have contributed to this milestone. We achieve more when we work together.

Above all, I thank the commuters of this region. You showed great patience when services stopped altogether during COVID-19, and again as they were gradually restored. Today's results owe much to that patience and support.

The progress in the Eastern Cape shows what sustained investment and steady service improvement can achieve. Our responsibility now is to protect these gains, extend their benefits and make them last.

Let us ensure that the convenience, safety and comfort we recognise today are felt every day by every passenger who travels by train in the Eastern Cape.

It is now my privilege to declare these stations officially open.

I thank you