



**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, MS BARBARA  
CREECY, AT THE SOUTHERN AFRICA TRANSPORT CONFERENCE  
6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2026**

Programme Director,  
Ministers Present,  
Captains of industry,  
Leaders and representatives across the transport value chain,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address you all today, under the theme Developing and Sustaining Transport Systems in an Uncertain World. The purpose, very plainly, is to chart a shared path for industry players—developers, operators, financiers, engineers, shippers, port authorities, logistics providers, and service providers—toward a transport system that is sustainable, resilient, and inclusive for all South Africans.

Let me start by acknowledging our current reality. The world is confronted by a sequence of interlinked crises—economic fluctuations, regional and global conflicts, resource constraints, and growing environmental risks. These disruptions ripple through passenger journeys, freight movements, and the

efficiency of supply chains that support our economy. When transport faces disruption, market efficiencies are compromised, and the sector's capacity to add value to goods, to jobs, and to social well-being is undermined.

In the South African context years of under-investment in logistics infrastructure and the post-pandemic downturn in rail and port performance, have led to increased competition from our neighbours, who threaten to capitalise on our logistics vulnerabilities.

At the inaugural Transport Conference, His Excellency President Ramaphosa said: "We cannot afford complacency, instead we must choose reform over stagnation. We must choose competitiveness over decline. We must choose inclusive growth over exclusion"

This week marks two years since the start of the Seventh Administration, and my appointment as the Minister of Transport. What this means is that we are able to observe the impact of the reforms that we are undertaking, ensuring that our transport and logistics sector acts as an enabler and catalyst for sustained and inclusive economic growth, and not as a constraint.

Ladies and gentlemen

Rail and port reform are at the centre of government's agenda for the transport sector.

Our ambitious reforms in the rail space seek to re-establish rail as the backbone of freight logistics system.

A strategic shift from road to rail is essential in our current local and global circumstances. Increased utilisation of rail transport enhances road safety, decreases congestion on our roads, reduces wear-and tear of road surfaces, and, critically, is responsible for lower CO2 emissions.

The rail reform programme is informed by the White Paper on the National Rail Policy of 2022 and the National Freight Logistics Roadmap of 2023. In the past year, since I last addressed this conference, a number of significant developments have occurred which aim to translate policy into tangible outcomes in this regard.

In March this year the Department of Transport approved eleven private Train Operating Companies (TOCs) to access the national rail network. These TOCs will bring their expertise and capital to rail operations, whilst the network will remain state-owned and belong to the people of South Africa.

Operations are due to commence in April 2027, and these operators will contribute significantly to government's objective of moving 250 million tonnes of freight on the Transnet rail network by 2030.

On Thursday last week TRIM published the second Network Statement that aims to ensure these newly appointed TOCs can raise the capital they need to equip themselves with rolling stock and workers to begin operations.

Earlier this year Draft National Rail Master Plan was approved for public comment. The Master Plan aims to address the gap between current annual freight volumes of 165 million tonnes, and the market demand of 280 million.

As a sign of the healthy demand for third party access to the rail network, Private Sector Participation projects situated at the Ngqura Manganese Export Corridor, Richards Bay Dry Bulk Terminal, and the Container terminal will all go to market during the course of this financial year.

Two weeks ago, the World Bank identified Durban, Ngqura and Port Elizabeth as among the most improved ports in the world.

Ladies and gentlemen

I am proud to announce that over the past two years we have been able to recover 35 of 40 priority rail lines with a section recently recovered on the Midway to Lenz route. This recovery has entailed re-signalling of lines, and the upgrading and refurbishing of stations and perway.

In the 2020/21 financial year in the immediate aftermath of the covid pandemic and widespread vandalism and destruction of rail infrastructure, the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) recorded 10 million passenger trips. By the end of the 2025/26 financial year 101 million passenger trips were recorded. The aim is to reach 600million passenger trips by 2030/31, in line with pre-pandemic passenger figures.

The locally-manufactured blue Isitimela Sabantu “People’s Train” has been introduced on these recovered lines, and they offer a safe, affordable and punctual alternative to commuters. In our current economic climate, the

provision of passenger rail to working class South Africans is a socioeconomic imperative

Ladies and gentlemen

Underpinning our current reform agenda is the notion that we cannot continue with a business-as-usual approach to the challenges that we face. If we do not adapt to the current geopolitical realities with which we are confronted, we will be left behind.

What do we mean by sustainable transport? It is mobility that minimises greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impacts, while ensuring safety, affordability, energy and resource efficiency, and equitable access to mobility for all. Climate-proofing our infrastructure is also a key part of creating sustainable transport systems.

One of the most immediate ways in which we as sector can address the challenge of climate change is through lowering the emissions produced by our various operations. As I have already mentioned, the shift of passengers and freight from road to rail at scale will produce less emissions, and the embrace of alternative greener fuel sources is a must for the sector as a whole.

In May this year I attended the signing of an agreement which launched the Liquid Gas Terminal at the port of Ngqura in Nelson Mandela Bay. The terminal will support gas-to-power generation and industrial growth, and aid in diversifying South Africa's energy mix.

The development of the Boegoebaai port in the Northern Cape is progressing, with technical, environmental and commercial workstreams advancing in parallel. The project will establish the Province's first commercial port, reducing the dependence on Namibian and distant local ports for the export of mining and agricultural commodities.

Boegoebaai will also host a green hydrogen hub with storage infrastructure, transmission grids and pipelines, to establish the Northern Cape as a future leader in green hydrogen production and export and will play key role in South Africa's Just Energy Transition.

The aviation sector is a key enabler of freight movements, but also of tourism, an important part of our economy, yet the sector is also a source of high carbon emissions.

At the recent National Transport Conference we discussed global trends towards sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs), especially important given the growing global commitment towards SAFs in line with the industry's environmental sustainability requirements to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation has developed a Business Implementation study on the development of SAFs. This study focuses on using domestic sugar as a fuel source, it also looks at the feasibility of using the Mossel Bay refinery for production.

The draft study has been well received by our sister Departments, Agriculture and Minerals and Petroleum Resources – signalling the type of cross-sector inter-departmental collaboration that will help secure our energy needs as we adjust to meeting our emissions obligations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we adjust to meet our climate obligations, we must harness the latest technologies to revolutionise many of our processes.

This can entail automated fare collection and enhanced intermodal operability, whereby one payment method can be used to pay fares, whether they be via minibus taxi or rail.

SANTACO has piloted a cashless route in Gauteng, which is a first step in regularising and de-risking the industry, and has set up a technical working group with the Department's Public Transport Branch, which will research aspects of digitisation of operations, regulation, and registration of operators.

The Department's Aviation Branch has also been working to address red tape in issuing Air Services Licences and Foreign Operators Permits through beginning the automation of these processes. This will ensure future traceability and transparency and address the processing delays that we have been experiencing in this regard.

At a broader level the Department and its 20 entities will work together to develop a single digitised transport sector platform that will host all online permitting services through a common citizen interface.

In closing, I reiterate our collective vision: a transport system that is integrated, sustainable, resilient, and inclusive; that strengthens our economy, safeguards our environment, and serves all South Africans with dignity and efficiency.

The road ahead will demand steadfast leadership, prudent policy, and sustained investment. With your partnership, we can deliver a transport future that is robust against uncertainty and beneficial to every citizen.

Thank you.