



public works,  
roads & transport

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# POLICY & BUDGET *Speech* 2024/25





**Mr Thulasizwe Thomo (MPL)**  
**MEC: Public Works, Roads and Transport**

# POLICY AND BUDGET SPEECH 2024/25

## VOTE 08

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- **Madam Speaker: Honourable LL Masina**
- **Deputy Speaker: Honourable S Masango**
- **Honourable Premier: Mr Mandla Padney Ndlovu**
- **Honourable Members of the Executive Council**
- **Honourable Members of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature**
- **Honourable Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public Works, Roads and Transport, Ms Jester Sidell, as well as Members of the Committee**
- **Chairperson of House of Traditional Leaders, Kgoshi Mokoena and Members of the House of Traditional Leaders**
- **Executive Mayors and Councillors present**
- **Acting Director General: Mr Peter Nyoni**
- **Head of the Department: Mr Charles Morolo, Senior Managers and all employees of the Department**
- **Members of the Audit Committee and Risk Management Committee led by Chairpersons Messrs Kenneth Mhlongo and Krishen Sukdev respectively**
- **Heads of Departments and Chief Executive Officers of Entities**
- **Leadership of the African National Congress and the Alliance Partners**
- **Representatives of Business and Labour Formations**
- **Leadership of the Taxi and Bus Industries**
- **Esteemed Guests**
- **Representatives of the Media**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. Madam Speaker, it is a singular honour to stand before this August House to deliver my maiden Policy and Budget Speech as the MEC for the Mpumalanga Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport.
2. In the short period as an MEC, I have been privileged to engage in enriching debates in the last two weeks, which include the NCOP's Policy Debate on Budget Vote 13: Department of Public Works and Infrastructure as well as the Policy Debate on Budget Vote 40 for the Department of Transport.
3. However, today's address to this August House holds a special significance, as we have gathered to chart the financial course and policy trajectory of the department I have the privilege to lead. This moment presents an opportunity for us to outline our policy priorities, and budget allocations, which will propel our department to success.
4. While the task before us is certainly daunting, I am unwavering in my resolve to leverage the strong foundation built by my predecessors over the past three decades.
5. I am deeply honoured and humbled to assume the mantle of leadership as the MEC of this department, and I eagerly embrace this momentous role with unwavering enthusiasm and dedication. I extend my sincere gratitude to my organization the ANC and the Premier of the province, for entrusting me with this strategic portfolio.
6. Their confidence in my abilities has afforded me the privilege of addressing this esteemed House today, and I am committed to justifying their trust through tireless service and exemplary leadership.
7. Honourable Speaker, I am reminded of the words of Oliver Reginald Tambo, when he said that **"To go back means defeat!"** and this is why we cannot afford to relegate, we should not agree to be defeated by the challenges that lie ahead. We can't lose momentum now. Our resolve to serve our people must continue, unwavering and strong.
8. We have come too far over the last 30 years to give up now. We have done wonders in serving our people, from expanding access to education by building schools and providing our learners with scholar transport, to building new roads and bridges. To give up now would be a betrayal of the trust our people have placed on us.
9. As we begin this seventh administration, we must do so with renewed focus. Even in the face of economic uncertainties and fiscal austerities, we must find ways to continue delivering on our promises. Let us draw strength from our past achievements and the wise words of OR Tambo and use them as a springboard for even greater progress to serve the people of Mpumalanga.
10. Honourable Speaker, within a month and three weeks of assuming this role, we have already embarked on a comprehensive analysis of the handover report, which has yielded a profound understanding of the department's current landscape. Armed with this invaluable knowledge, we were empowered to hit the ground running, discharging our responsibilities with clarity and purpose.
11. This informed approach has enabled us to craft and implement strategic initiatives that will catalyse a meaningful approach to elevating the department's performance and meeting our set priorities as outlined in our Annual Performance Plan and Operational Plan.
12. Honourable Speaker, I am delighted to report that we have embarked on the implementation of our 100-days in office Action-plan, a meticulously crafted initiative designed to inject dynamism and momentum into the work of the seventh administration. This immediate program has been carefully crafted to accelerate the delivery of our strategic priorities, ensuring a tangible impact within the first 100 days.



13. The key initiatives on this action-plan includes fast-tracking the completion of long-overdue infrastructure projects and commencing with forthcoming projects. The 100-day action plan has been proving to be a resounding success, serving as a catalyst in our strategy to propel rapid progress, establish a culture of excellence, and set a high-performance tone for our department's tenure in the seventh administration.
14. Last week Thursday, Honourable Speaker, we marked a significant milestone with the handover of the long-awaited Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market to the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (DARDLEA) and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism.
15. This achievement signals a major breakthrough in our quest to eliminate incomplete projects, and we are now poised to embark on our strategic plans with renewed vigour and determination.

## ROAD SAFETY

16. Honourable Speaker, we are deeply disturbed by the persistently growing rate of fatalities on our roads, and as a department, we have responded with renewed urgency by scaling up our law enforcement operations and intensifying our monitoring on scholar transport services. Our primary objective is to decisively clamp down on reckless behaviour, prevent overloading, and ensure compliance with safety regulations across both public and scholar transport sectors.
17. Over this past weekend we conducted another successful multi-disciplinary law enforcement operation on Moloto Road R573, led by an all-female team of transport inspectors in commemoration of Women's Month. Honourable Speaker, these operations are informed by our unwavering commitment to reduce the carnages on our roads.
18. Since assuming this office, I have been dismayed by the frequency and severity of road accidents on our provincial roads, and my visits to the scenes of these tragedies have left me deeply concerned about the need for urgent action to improve road safety.
19. I visited the accident scenes of two horrible accidents that saw 16 people losing their lives on our provincial roads. In June 2024, 10 people were killed and 24 seriously injured on the R42 collision near Delmas. Last week, 6 learners lost their lives when their school bus collided with a train in Middelburg. Twenty (20) other learners were rushed to hospital with injuries ranging from serious to minor. Our hearts go out to the bereaved families, and we offer our deepest, most sincere condolences during this difficult time.
20. Madam Speaker, these incidents and many others once again put a spotlight on our search for sustainable solutions to prevent road carnages. As a department, we have appointed 98 additional transport inspectors in April 2024 to deal with non-compliant operators. The availability of transport inspectors form the backbone of providing a 24-hour, seven-day a week and 365 days Arrive Alive campaign. This will ensure daily visibility of traffic officers on the road daily and at all hours.
21. We are indeed excited by the Department of Transport's steadfast commitment to fast-track the implementation of a shift system by 31 March 2025. At the provincial level, I am eager to collaborate closely with my counterpart, MEC Jackie Macie, from the Department of Community Safety, Security and Liaison to ensure we meet this critical deadline.
22. Closely tied to this initiative is the imperative need to equip our law enforcement officials with the essential tools of the trade, including vehicles, firearms, uniforms, and other vital resources. These are the bare minimum requirements for effective law enforcement, and we are resolute in our determination to ensure our officers are adequately equipped to discharge their duties with maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

## GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

23. Honourable Speaker, the Auditor-General (AG) plays a vital role as a stakeholder in the public sector's financial reporting and governance architecture, as well as in the auditing profession at large. As an independent and objective guardian of public finances, the AG's oversight and expertise are crucial in ensuring transparency on the work we do as a department.
24. Internally, we have taken a significant step towards bolstering our governance framework by appointing a new audit committee, which will serve as a cornerstone of our oversight mechanism. In conjunction with our dedicated internal audit unit, this committee will play a pivotal role in reinforcing our accountability ecosystem, ensuring that the highest standards of transparency and financial discipline are upheld, and providing an additional layer of assurance on our internal controls.
25. Six days ago, the Auditor-General (AG) concluded its audit for the 2023/24 financial year, and our department has once again received an unqualified audit opinion. The AG's report has highlighted critical areas that require attention, with a particular focus on recurring themes such as material misstatements, irregular expenditure, and non-compliance. These findings have been identified as key focal points for corrective action. In response, I have directed our management to develop comprehensive action plans to address all identified weaknesses, which will be closely monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure implementation and lasting improvement.
26. Honourable Speaker, the consequence management and disciplinary actions within and outside the department are finally gaining traction. It is good that the issue of Protective Personal Equipment (PPEs) was being attended to by the Special Investigation Unit (SIU), including holding those responsible to account. Considering the limited resources of government, **fighting corruption** is essential in our endeavour to create a better life for all. The public also get hurt when resources are wasted hence minimising inefficient is equally critical.
27. In our quest to create a better life for all, combating corruption is crucial, especially given the limited resources at our disposal. The public also bears the brunt of corruption, as wasted resources could have been allocated to vital public services. Therefore, minimizing inefficiency and maximizing accountability are essential in our unwavering commitment to good governance and the well-being of the people of our province.
28. Madam Speaker, I wish to bring to the fore a pressing concern that warrants our collective attention as government, the tendency of late payment or non-payment of invoices. This practice does not only affect the very existence of small, medium, and micro enterprises but can also precipitate the downfall of established companies that have depleted their overdraft and credit facilities.
29. The failure to settle invoices within the stipulated 30-day period is, in essence, a form of economic sabotage on a grand scale. Furthermore, it is a manifestation of corruption when those responsible for processing payments exact favours from desperate service providers. We must condemn this unethical behaviour in the strongest possible terms and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

## BUILDING CAPACITY OF THE STATE

30. Madam Speaker, the National Development Plan (NDP) is clear that a capable, ethical and a developmental state is required to facilitate sustainable service delivery. It therefore goes without saying that our workforce and personnel are the most valuable asset of the department. A capable Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport is fundamental to the successful implementation of the provincial infrastructure agenda. **Mpumalanga works because of Public Works!**

31. It is against this understanding that we embarked on an ambitious programme to recruit 580 employees in the past financial year. The department managed to fill 440 (77%) posts and 133 posts could not be filled due to cost containment. The filled posts include 131 road workers, 49 artisans, 20 groundsmen and 18 boiler operators amongst others. We want to reduce over reliance on service providers and build our capacity by in-sourcing functions such as scholar transport monitoring, pothole patching, as well as grass cutting.
32. Building internal capacity cannot be done overnight but it requires commitment to invest on the human capital of our department. Regrettably, our department has faced significant challenges due to high staff turnover rates, exacerbated by the provincial moratorium on filling vacant posts and natural attrition. This has had a ripple effect, compromising the effective functioning of the department. Ideally, the vacancies left by those who reached the mandatory retirement age have to be advertised, to enable the department to fill these vacant positions.
33. Madam Speaker, the department has partnered with various Sector Education and Training Authorities to create training opportunities. A total of **R82,4 million** has been made available to increase training opportunities for both our workforce and the unemployed. Training programmes include artisan development (electrical, welding and painting) plumbing, patching of potholes, road maintenance, supply chain management and occupational health & safety amongst others.
34. Through the **Young Professionals Programme**, we intend to place 200 technical graduates with respective professional firms and contractors that are implementing our various infrastructure projects. The process of creating a provincial database of such graduates has since been completed and now we shift to placement based training. Therefore, we call upon the private sector and our Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) firms to create placement opportunities for these graduates.
35. A crucial aspect of our department's long-term strategy to enhance internal capacity, is the acquisition of essential vehicles, plant, and equipment. Regrettably, our current fleet's condition reflects poor decision-making in the past, resulting in exorbitant rental costs that are unsustainable and hinder our ability to perform certain tasks in-house.
36. Consistent with the honourable Premier's Opening of the Legislature Address, the department has set aside a total budget of R42.9 million to procure 5 buses, 13 vehicles, 4 low-bed trailers, 1 roller, 1 paver, 1 milling machine and graders. This investment will enable us to improve our operational efficiency, reduce reliance on external rentals, and enhance our overall service delivery.
37. Honourable Speaker, the capacity to deliver effective and efficient services also lies in the department's appetite for creativity and innovativeness. The 4th Industrial Revolution encourages cooperation between man and machines thus moving us closer to **e-government**. Innovations such as e-procurement and e-auction are being explored in response to the increasing demand for online services. This change of mindset will go a long way in revolutionising service delivery.

## PUTTING SOUTH AFRICA TO WORK

38. In 2012, South Africa adopted the **National Development Plan (NDP)** – a plan that was widely consulted (on) and endorsed by many including various political parties and private sector. While the NDP was adopted in 2012, the journey towards the ideals expressed in the NDP started in 1994 and to a great extent crystallised in 1996 through the Constitution. The past six administrations at both national and provincial level have made significant strides towards building a better life for all South Africans.
39. This plan remains our compass as the 7th Administration and Government of National Unity (GNU). Noteworthy is that the National Development Plan (NDP) places infrastructure at the centre of development because of its strong correlation with economic transformation and job creation.

40. The delivery of the envisaged mass infrastructure rollout requires a high level of discipline and diligently focussed efforts from multiple role players. Departmentally, we rely on a multi sectoral approach to fulfil the provincial infrastructure agenda and its growth aspirations. Therefore, it is imperative that we enhance our capacity to deliver infrastructure by drawing valuable lessons from the experiences of the past 6 Administrations. We cannot continue to employ the same approaches and expect different outcomes.
41. The support of private sector is imperative in our endeavour to unleash a massive infrastructure rollout programme. The fiscus alone will not be able to fund our ambitious programme to turn South Africa into a construction site. Our **Adopt a Road Approach** is starting to yield the desired results and we have partnered with various mining houses to rehabilitate P171/1 from Mashishing to Sikhukhune Junction. We hope to unlock more funding to rehabilitate the Mbalenhle to Secunda road through this approach.
42. Infrastructure governance also demands a clear strategy and institutional framework to promote robust coordination across levels of government. The **District Development Model (DDM)** provides us with a streamlined approach of how we should facilitate integrated planning between the three spheres of government. If implemented properly, the DDM will amplify and facilitate realisation of the short and long-term priorities of the Mpumalanga Infrastructure Master Plan (MIMP).
43. Madam Speaker, the Public Works Programme is an inherently complex and demanding portfolio, which has become even more daunting due to the escalating disruptions on construction sites. We are gravely concerned about the continuing presence of construction mafias, whose nefarious activities not only undermine our efforts to stimulate economic growth and job creation but also jeopardize the integrity of our projects.
44. To mitigate these challenges, we have intensified our stakeholder engagement initiatives, fostering collaborative relationships and managing expectations to ensure the successful delivery of our projects and the attainment of our development objectives.
45. Over and above that, South Africa is a participatory democracy, which means that government is obliged to consult its citizens or create a platform for active engagements with its citizens. Involvement of the community at project inception can provide valuable insight about the operating environment. This also sets a platform to clarify the 30% local beneficiation and sub-contracting arrangements. It must be noted that while the dialogue continues, **lawlessness must not be tolerated!**

## INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

46. Madam Speaker, inclusive growth has been and continues to be, a major focus of government. In his State of the Nation Address 2024, President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa announced that the Government of National Unity has resolved to dedicate the next five years to actions that will advance three strategic priorities: namely, “to drive inclusive growth and job creation, to reduce poverty and tackle high cost of living, and to build a capable, ethical and developmental state”.
47. In pursuit of driving **inclusive growth and job creation**, the Department will focus on public procurement in order to achieve diversity, equity and inclusion.
48. The rolling out of massive infrastructure creates demand for labour and other construction materials. In recognition of this, we have a responsibility to prepare the historically marginalised women, youth and people with disabilities for the upcoming economic empowerment opportunities. I have directed the HOD to coordinate a **Women and Youth in construction symposium** to be held during this month of August. The symposium is a critical building block to the transformation of the industry.



## SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

49. Madam Speaker, the Department continues to deliver on its mandate to support client departments in order to realise their strategic objectives. Through the public works programme, 127 projects were completed on behalf of the following client departments in 2023/24 financial year: Education (101), Health (6), Social Development (5) and Culture, Sport & Recreation (15). We have pursued our mandate with zeal and commitment, but more work is still required in order to reclaim our status as the implementing agent of choice.
50. Notwithstanding these achievements, there has been delays to complete some strategic projects which eroded the confidence of our client departments. I have categorised these as special projects (i.e. Mkhondo Boarding School, Parliamentary Village and Middelburg Hospital) because they require special attention. More importantly, I have made an undertaking to complete these projects within my first 100 days in office. These are part of the 156 projects that will be completed on behalf of various client departments during the current financial year.
51. The Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport is a key player in the delivery of social infrastructure handling over 300 projects (worth billions) per annum. Given the importance of this department, ongoing capacitation is required in order to remain relevant and are equal to the task. We therefore welcome the commitment by the Honourable Premier to capacitate this department. From our side, we will continue to pursue synergies to deliver infrastructure better and with greater urgency and efficiency.

## IMMOVABLE ASSET MANAGEMENT

52. Madam Speaker, government has done very well in delivering new infrastructure but minimal efforts have been made to ensure that old infrastructure remains intact to support service delivery. If truth be told, we are more reactive rather than proactive in conducting regular preventative maintenance of state-owned buildings. User departments are supposed to **budget for maintenance** of these buildings while the custodian (DPWRT) advises and provide the necessary technical expertise.
53. The building infrastructure portfolio of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government is already huge and it is growing at a rapid rate. More worrisome is that there is limited and inadequate budget allocated for maintenance of these facilities. This leaves us with no choice but to prioritise the disposal of all redundant and non-core fixed assets, which are overburdening our maintenance budget.
54. In light of the Minister's pronouncement, we have taken decisive action to optimize the utilization of state properties. We are currently identifying suitable properties to repurpose for accommodation and office spaces for government departments. Furthermore, we are collaborating with Infrastructure South Africa (ISA) to develop project pipelines for the Refurbish, Operate and Transfer Programme (ROTP). This programme leverages private sector investment to revitalize the deteriorating condition of government properties, ensuring a sustainable and efficient solution for our infrastructure needs.

## PILGRIMS REST

55. Madam Speaker, Pilgrims Rest has been declared a national monument, therefore the town must be protected at all costs. We have noted with serious concerns the recent clashes between the local residents and illegal miners. Tourists are now scared to visit the town and this is threatening the livelihoods of the community which is depended on this industry. The actions of these miners must be condemned in the strongest terms and we call upon the police to intensify their **"Vala Umgodhi Campaign."**

## ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

56. Apart from social infrastructure, the department is also responsible for the rollout of economic infrastructure. This infrastructure and some key infrastructure assets (air transport, electricity supply, telecommunications, etc.) influence the economic growth effectiveness and competitiveness of the province. There is also a strong correlation between economic infrastructure development and job creation.

### Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market

57. Madam Speaker, the importance of investment in infrastructure to the socioeconomic advancement of our province cannot be overemphasized. The practical completion of the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market is crucial for food security and local economic development (LED).
58. This project, like many other massive capital infrastructure projects being implemented by our department, continue to demonstrate what can be accomplished by our efforts as a successful means of providing the necessary socio-economic infrastructure to the people of our province.

### Transport Infrastructure

59. Honourable Speaker, last year we completed 11 roads infrastructure projects across the province. This includes rehabilitation of the D2486 - N2 in Klipwal (Phase 1), block paving projects in Moloto Village, Mathibela and Gemsbokspruit–Tweefontein amongst others. Several road maintenance activities such as patching of potholes, reseal of surfaced roads, re-graveling and blading of gravel roads were completed across the province.
60. A critical aspect of the 2023/24 financial year was the budget cut and introduction of cost containment measures by National Treasury. Some infrastructure projects had to be deferred to subsequent financial years due to insufficient funds. I am glad to announce that the following projects are back in the priority list for this financial year and are at different stages:
- Construction of the Driekoppies Dam Bridge – **Project is at a procurement stage**
  - Construction of a Road over Rail Bridge on Road P100 in Emalahleni (Civic Bridge) - **Project is at a procurement stage**
  - Upgrading of Road D2950 from D797 to Dluhluma incl. Ring Road (8 km) Phase 1 - **Project is at a procurement stage**
  - Upgrading of Gedlembane road in Pienaar (8 km) - **Project is at a procurement stage**
  - Rehabilitation of Road D1723 (Luphisi Road) between Road D636 and P258/1 in Mbombela (6.82 km) - **Contractor appointed and mobilisation is on-going**
  - Rehabilitation of Road D2940 from Phiva to Mdladla (9 km) - **Project is at procurement stage**
  - Upgrading of Road D20 between R555 and Olifant River Lodge (5km) - **Project to be implemented in Partnership with the private sector during the fourth quarter. Draft MoU is being reviewed.**
  - Rehabilitation of Coal Haul Road P182/1 (R542) from km 26.25 to R38 between Van Dyksdrift and Hendrina Phase 3 (12.1 km) in Steve Tshwete - **Contractor appointed and mobilisation on-going**
  - Asphalt overlay of Road D2943 Langelooop and KaMhlushwa (Driekoppies Road) in Nkomazi (7 km) - **Contractor appointed and mobilisation is on-going**

61. The economic corridors of the Provincial Road network provide a foundation for facilitating and sustaining tourism as a driver for economic development. Accessibility of tourism destinations is critical in enabling cost effective economic and social development. A total budget of R 307 million was allocated for the implementation of various capital projects during the 2024/25 financial year. These include, amongst others, the following **ongoing tourism roads**:
- P33/4 between Hazyview and Sabie (Phase 2) (7.7 km)
  - Upgrade and rehabilitation of Road D4382 between Belfast and Justicia (13.60 km)
  - Rehabilitation of sections of P8/1 (R36) between Mashishing and Bambi (Phase 3) Part A (11 km)
62. The surge of heavy trucks on the Maputo Corridor and Coal Belt (which connects the coal mining areas near Witbank in Mpumalanga with the Richards Bay Port) places additional burden on the maintenance and rehabilitation demands of provincial roads. The proliferation of trucks on our roads poses a significant threat to the safety of all road users, including tourists who frequent our game reserves and natural attractions.
63. Moving cargo transportation from road to rail will relieve the burden on the fiscus and improve road safety. Equally, the transition from road to train commuting can be one of the safest and most time-efficient travel methods. Hence as Mpumalanga, it remains our strongest conviction that rail is an ideal mode of transport for the **Moloto Corridor**. Overall, there is potential to increase passenger rail across the entire province.

### WELISIZWE RURAL BRIDGE PROGRAMME

64. Madam Speaker, the implementation model for Welisizwe Bridges is very complex since it involves 4 departments. These are the National Department of Transport (DOT), South African National Defence Force (SANDF), National Department of Public Works & Infrastructure (DPWI) and the Provincial Department (DPWRT). The SANDF was appointed as the main contractor due to the skillset (including civil engineering) that is sitting with the force.
65. Also noteworthy is that the application for funding was made by DPWI but the funds are disbursed through the Department of Transport using the Provincial Road Maintenance Grant (PRMG) to distribute the money to the provinces. From this explanation, challenges were bound to emerge during the implementation stage. What further complicated matters was the appointment of a few suppliers from national to supply the components and material across all the 6 participating provinces.
66. Honourable Speaker, that is why last year we only managed to complete 4 bridges in Thembisile Hani instead of 17 bridges across 4 municipalities. To rectify these delays and expedite our infrastructure development, the department has made a formal representation to the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) and requested approval to adopt an accelerated delivery model.
67. This innovative approach will enable us to utilise the capabilities of local suppliers and term contractors, thereby stimulating economic growth and creating vital job opportunities for our local communities.
68. Notably, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) will continue to provide oversight and ensure quality control, signing off on the work in accordance with established implementation protocols.

## OPERATION VALAZONKE

69. Madam Speaker, the current strategy of fixing potholes is not sustainable - outsourcing of this function is too expensive and it has not yielded the desired results. In response, government is consolidating its resources and intends to build own capacity to patch potholes through the Valazonke programme. Also, a mass drive is being undertaken to recruit road workers that will patch potholes on national, provincial and local roads. Last year, we appointed 131 road workers but more are still needed.
70. The department is planning to launch a weekly service delivery program, called “**Kubhunya Lutfuli eMpumalanga**,” to improve road infrastructure across the Province.
71. Every Thursday, our dedicated team will embark on a comprehensive road maintenance blitz, focusing on regravelling, grading, and patching potholes.
72. This paradigm shift indicates our government’s intention to deal with potholes and improve roads maintenance. The feedback that we have received from the public is that our internal teams are doing a better job than appointed term contractors.
73. This view was also confirmed by Honourable Ngwenya (Ngrayi) in our last portfolio committee sitting – your feedback is appreciated. For Vala Zonke to be successful, we will be deploying our mechanised potholed patching vehicles to complement internal teams.
74. The Transport Infrastructure Programme for the 2024/25 financial year can be summarised as follows:
  - Upgrade of gravel roads to surfaced roads (R311,2 million)
  - Block paved roads (R83,2 million)
  - Rehabilitation of surfaced roads (R472,6 million)
  - Construction of new bridges as part of the Welisizwe Programme (R223 million)
  - Upgrading of bridges (R160 million)
  - Various maintenance activities (i.e. reseal and patching of surfaced roads and regravelling and blading of gravel roads (R828 million).

## CLIMATE CHANGE

75. Climate change highlights the importance of infrastructure and further reveals how its physical exposure can disrupt service delivery. The impact is also economically devastating hence the need for innovative solutions to ensure sustainable infrastructure. In response, infrastructure resilience is being created through incorporating **climate data** into infrastructure designs and spatial layouts. Simultaneously, existing infrastructure needs to be managed differently, given this natural crisis.
76. Climate change further highlights the need for innovative solutions to ensure a sustainable environment. In Mpumalanga, the procurement of renewable energy technologies (solar in particular) is being prioritised as part of the energy mix for state-owned facilities. We are packaging business plans to enable the province to access available funding for implementation of the **Just Energy Transition (JET) Implementation Plan**. Our pilot projects include Mmamethlake Hospital and Riverside Government Complex.

## INTEGRATED TRANSPORT

77. Madam Speaker, the department has an ongoing responsibility to provide integrated transport services that are in line with the developmental needs of the province. The enabling legislation to achieve this was amended and enacted in June 2024 - **the National Land Transport Amendment Act**. This revised act sees inclusion of non-motorised transport, enhances the roles of provinces and municipalities but mostly reflects government’s commitment to a modern, inclusive and efficient transport system.



78. Another critical legislation to this regard was the promulgation of the **Economic Regulation of Transport Act**. This act seeks to create economic growth and welfare by promoting an effective and productive transport sector. It introduces a Transport Regulator that will be responsible for regulating prices, investigate complaints, monitor and enforce compliance in the transport sector.
79. Honourable Speaker, **transforming the public transport system** is a relatively long journey which requires focused and phased interventions. The system of apartheid in South Africa left a legacy of social segregation, and a highly distorted separation of people from both their places of work and most of social services. Therefore, the repeal of old and introduction of new legislation is part of government efforts to restructure these geographies of exclusion and inequality.
80. It will be ungrateful of us not to acknowledge the other efforts by the National Department of Transport in granting provinces the **Public Transport Operation Grant (PTOG)**. The grant has increased by 4% from R742,5 million in 2023/24 to R775,8 million in 2024/25. In relation to scholar transport, the province has budgeted R464 million in the current financial year. All this funding will provide a relief to the poor and many school-going children as well as accelerate their social inclusion.
81. Madam Speaker, I must acknowledge that our Scholar Transport programme has encountered challenges, which calls for us to heighten our monitoring efforts and explore innovative solutions to enhance the management of this critical initiative.
82. To address the challenges on scholar transport, we are actively looking at alternative management models that can be leveraged to optimize scholar transport services, ensuring the safe, reliable, and efficient transportation of our learners in the province.
83. Madam Speaker, the department hosted the **Provincial Taxi Indaba** in 2023 that was attended by both SANTACO and NTA membership. This gathering amongst others served to build consensus for economic sustainability of the industry. Since then, the department appointed a Transport Advisory Committee to oversee the provincial efforts to unite the taxi industry and to implement the resolutions of the Indaba. The work of this committee will be forwarded to the Minister of Transport for consideration as part of the national reforms.

## JOB CREATION

84. Our province is grappling with an unprecedented unemployment rate of 48.1%, driven by a number of socio-economic factors. Undeterred, our department remains resolute in its determination to tackle this challenge head-on, through the implementation of effective and sustainable job massification initiatives. One of those interventions is the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which continues to create work and training opportunities for the unemployed.
85. Amidst the challenges, the province created **177 188** work opportunities through the EPWP in the past five years. In the Medium Term Development Plan: 2024 – 2029, the department will coordinate creation of **220 575** work opportunities through the use of labour intensive methods. These opportunities will be created through EPWP's four sectors namely: (i) Infrastructure, (ii) Social (iii) Environment & Culture and (iv) Non-State sector.
86. At its core, this EPWP programme aims to address the stubborn triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Government can overcome these challenges by expanding public employment programmes amongst others. Unfortunately, many public employment interventions focus on redundant work, are poorly managed and leave young people frustrated. In response, a new implementation approach based on the **Khawuleza (acceleration)** Model has been introduced for EPWP Phase 5.

87. The repositioning and rebranding of the EPWP will see massification of this programme and unleashing of meaningful interventions such as:
- Road maintenance (grass cutting, cleaning of drains, pothole patching, brick paving and ensuring pothole free road networks) – **Siyatentela roads maintenance programme**
  - Cleaning of neighbourhoods and waste management – **National Youth Service**
  - Building maintenance – **National Youth Service**
  - Retrofitting of government buildings and solar installations – **Artisan Development Programme**
  - Fixing of lifts and plumbing – **Artisan Development Programme**
88. Madam Speaker, we need to re-evaluate our exit strategies for public employment programmes, as they only provide temporary relief. While these programmes have fulfilled their mandates, more needs to be done to maximize government's investment. The removal of work experience requirements for entry-level public sector posts is a positive step, but the private sector must collaborate with government to effectively address youth unemployment.

## THE BUDGET

89. Madam Speaker, the overall budget allocation for the 2024/25 financial year experienced an increase of R96.1 million or 1.8% when compared to the main appropriation budget of 2023/24 financial year. Noteworthy is that there was a decrease on equitable share allocations of R251 million due to the decline in the National Revenue Fund. This calls for the department to make best use of the available resources and work within the constraints of the budget to deliver the planned outputs.

90. I now request this House to consider and approve the budget of the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, Vote 8, which is as follows:

<b>1. Administration</b>	<b>R343, 210, 000</b> (Three hundred and forty three million, two hundred and ten thousand rands)
<b>2 Public Works Infrastructure</b>	<b>R 922, 207, 000</b> (Nine hundred and twenty two million, two hundred and seven thousand rands)
<b>3.. Transport Infrastructure</b>	<b>R 2, 764, 139, 000</b> (Two billion, seven hundred and sixty four million, one hundred and thirty nine thousand rands)
<b>4. Transport Operations</b>	<b>R 1, 452, 680, 000</b> (One billion, four hundred and fifty two million, six hundred and eighty thousand rands)
<b>5. Community Based Programme</b>	<b>R80, 684, 000</b> (Eighty million, six hundred and eighty four thousand rands)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>R 5, 562, 920, 000</b> (Five billion, five hundred and sixty two million, nine hundred and twenty thousand rands)

## CONCLUSION

91. Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, as we embark on the 7th Administration, I pledge to collaborate with each of you to fulfil these commitments. I am confident that, collectively, we possess the requisite skills, expertise, and passion to drive meaningful change and leave a lasting, positive imprint on the spatial and economic landscape of our province.
92. As Joseph Stiglitz, the esteemed economist, once said, “Investing in infrastructure is a down payment on the future, and it is a critical component of a comprehensive economic strategy.” I wholeheartedly agree with his words, and our investments in social, economic, and capital infrastructure projects will generate long-term returns, driving sustainable economic growth and prosperity for the people of our province.

***Honourable Speaker, Ngiyabonga!***



## MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

### Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport

Rhino Building, No. 7 Government Boulevard  
Riverside Park, Ext 2  
Mbombela  
1200

Private Bag X 11310  
Mbombela  
1200

Tel: 013 766 6696/6979 | Fax: 013 766 8453



DPWRT Mpumalanga



@DpwrtMpumalanga



dpwrtmpumalanga



Mpumalanga Department  
of Public Works, Roads  
and Transport



CommunicationDPWRT  
@mpg.gov.za



dpwrt.mpg.gov.za

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