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# Lekgotla explores alternative transport modes

**Nthusang Lerafa**

**T**ransport is an important factor for socio-economic development and it is the heartbeat of any economy. It is for this reason that Bokone Bophirima's Department of Community Safety and Transport held a Transport and Safety Lekgotla last week to find solutions to improve the provincial transport network and strengthen ties with all the stakeholders.

Because Bokone Bophirima is a predominantly rural province, one of the challenges that were identified at the Transport Lekgotla is the integration of rural areas - including farming communities - into the provincial transport network.

One of the key discussions was the role that transport plays in the agricultural sector. The department said bringing back rail transport as a cheaper way of commuting and moving goods was one of the solutions.

MEC for Community Safety and Transport Management, Dr. Mokitshang Mpho Mofhegane, told Semphetha about the benefits an improved transport network would bring to the province - from growing the agricultural sector to generally stimulating investments.

"The role of transport in agriculture is very important because it can transform the rural economy. When there are good transport networks farmers will not be restricted to subsistence farming, but they can go into commercial farming.

"As part of our integrated transport network plans we have spoken to the South African National Road Agency Limited (SANRAL) about improving some of the road infrastructure because it plays an important role in the economy.

"We had already started piloting the Mahikeng-Johannesburg rail route, but due to issues that are currently facing the



A modernized donkey cart presented as an alternative mode of transport for school children. Photo by Mpho Mphahlele



MEC Mofhegane briefing the media about the outcomes of the Transport Lekgotla

**"South Africa's transport infrastructure has a direct impact on the growth of the economy, contributing 48% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Transport determines the efficiency at which we do business in our country and if enough investment is put into the sector we could see some positive growth in our economy."**

Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) the project has been halted. The department is also looking at connecting the Mahikeng airport to the rail network because this will make it easier to export agricultural produce. As we all know, the price of oil is very high and if farmers are paying a lot for petrol it means that food will be more expensive when it reaches the consumer," the MEC said.

Important issues such as how taxi owners and drivers can contribute meaningfully to the economy were also discussed. Moloopi Moseki from the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) said it was

important for taxi owners and drivers not to only see themselves as people who are only ferrying passengers to different destinations, but also as entrepreneurs.

"Taxi owners should form co-operatives and venture into the manufacturing of key components of the motorizing industry such as tyres and car parts. It is also important that we become owners of the service stations where our passenger vehicles are serviced and also own the car part dealerships where car parts are sold," Moseki said.

David Kruger, Managing Director and founder of Cape Town based supply

chain and road freight logistics company, Conargo, believes the sluggish economy of the country could be stimulated if the South African government can fast track its expenditure on strategic infrastructure projects in transport.

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# Mixed bag of successes and concerns for provincial crime stats

## Obakeng Maje

Stock theft has increased dramatically in Bokone Bophirima province, prompting government to toughen its stance against livestock thieves.

With Bokone Bophirima being a predominantly rural province, many of its residents in villages are into livestock farming. In addition to this, the province is home to scores of commercial livestock

farmers who have fallen prey to livestock theft in recent years.

The province released its crime statistics on Thursday, with MEC for Community Safety and Transport Management, Dr Mokganthang Mpho Motshabane saying "farmers have every reason to worry as incidents of stock-theft have risen".

The South African Police Services (SAPS) Brigadier Jenneatte Ntshabalela who announced the province's crime stats, said stock theft increased by 22.5%

in the year under review. Bokone Bophirima has been aware of increased livestock theft cases. Last month Premier Supra Mahumapelo, warned livestock thieves that their days are numbered.

"I want to warn people who specialise in stealing the livestock of our hard working farmers. We are going to work more with our police to look for them and make their lives a living in hell because it cannot be business as usual while we know that there are people who have committed themselves to terrorising our farmers without being caught," he said.

MEC Motshabane said the province has experienced a decrease in some serious crimes in the 2016/17 financial year.

"We have experienced reduction in serious crimes like murder, attempted murder and bank robbery. Even though we have recorded a sharp rise in violent and sexual offence crimes during the 2016-17 financial year, we will use the statistics as early warning to strengthen crime prevention operations and various other strategies meant to ensure that our people are and feel safe," he said.

Brigadier Ntshabale said over 96 000 cases of crime were reported in the year under review.

"Police managed to recover over 700

illegal firearms, drug related crime went down by 8.0% while hijacking has increased by 5.4%," she said.

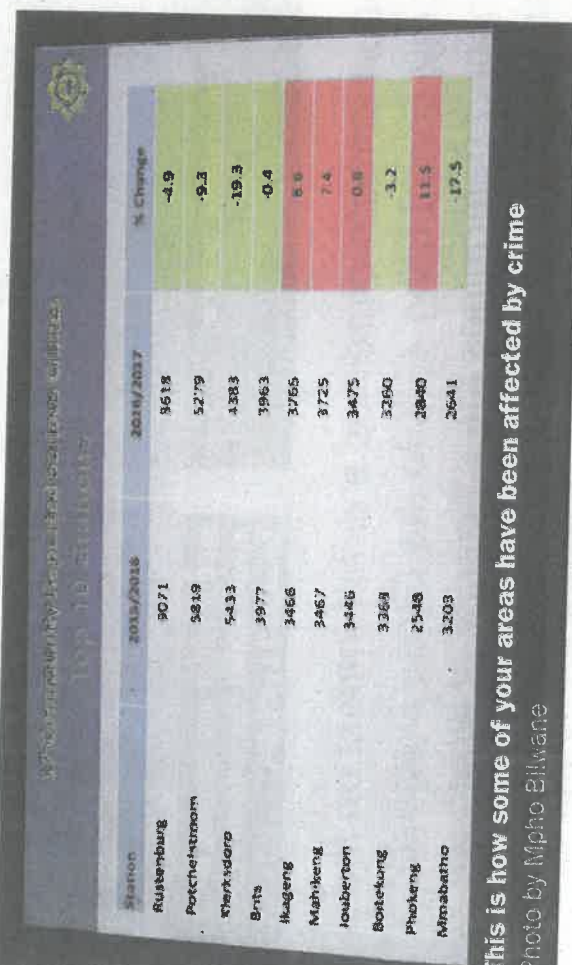
Motshabane added that aggravated robbery recorded an increase of 11.7%.

"This is closely followed by common robbery at an equally worrying 7.1% accounting for 172 more cases reported compared to the previous year. Sexual offences came third with 162 more cases reported in the 2016-17 report. On a positive note, there were reductions in murder, attempted murder and assault with the intent to cause grievous bodily harm (GBH) cases.

"Traditionally, assault GBH is the major crime problem in the North West," the MEC said.

He said government has got strategic plans to capacitate Community Policing Forums (CPF's) across the province so they may help to fight crime.

CPF's provincial chairperson, Dixon Ngamiane, had this to say: "The crime statistics are not satisfactory. However, we will strengthen our working relationship with SAPS to combat crime. Police cannot fight that alone. There are social crimes that are taking place behind close doors and our communities know about them."



This is how some of your areas have been affected by crime

Photo by Mpho Bilwane

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# Elderly women are vulnerable to rape

TNA REPORTER  
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MBUYISELO Botha, a gender activist from Sonke Gender Justice said elderly women who lived alone were vulnerable to rape.

"Even though there are no figures, elderly women who live by themselves are prime targets. The criminals are aware that they would be reluctant to report these crimes to the police. Because of shame and stigma, a lot of

elderly women who get raped end up not reporting to the police," Botha said.

While there are no figures on rapes against elderly women in South Africa, it is believed that the trend is on the rise.

Research conducted on the matter in Mthatha, Eastern Cape, found that there was an increase in the number of elderly women who were raped between 2007 and 2009 in the area. The study found that the majority of these rapes took place at home.

Police have pleaded with communities to take care of elderly woman after a 32-year-old man, Lucky Mokgothu was given a life sentence for raping an 84-year-old woman in the province.

North West's police Adèle Myburgh said: "I would strongly appeal to our communities to ensure that elderly people are not left on their own, but they have someone taking care of them as they are vulnerable to abuse."

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# Police boss celebrates arrest of three men

ELFAS TORERAI

PROVINCIAL police commissioner Lt-Gen Baile Motswenyane has commended the police for arresting three armed men in three separate crime incidents at the weekend.

The arrests were seen as a major leap forward in the province's quest to reduce serious crime.

The first man was arrested after a truck was hijacked on the N4 on Friday evening.

Provincial police spokesperson Lt-Col Adèle Myburgh said the hijacking took place in Swartruggens.

"A 33-year-old suspect was arrested shortly after he allegedly hijacked a truck.

"A truck driver was driving along the N4 road in the vicinity of Groot Marico on Friday evening about 7.30pm when the occupants of a Toyota Quantum threatened him with firearms and forced him to stop," Myburgh said.

"The truck driver was then bundled into the suspects' vehicle and two of the men drove off with the truck.

"The victim managed to escape. The matter was reported to the police, who traced the truck and pulled it over on the Swartruggens-Zeerust road," Myburgh said.

The hijackers started shooting at the police, who managed to recover the vehicle, worth R500 000 and arrested one man on the scene. No one was injured during the shooting.

The arrested suspect is expected to appear in the Lehurutshe Magistrate's Court today.

A 29-year-old man was arrested in an unrelated incident in Lichtenburg on Friday evening.

The man had apparently pulled out a firearm and demanded cash from a liquor store.

"The cash in the till was handed to him.

He instructed the victims to move towards the back of the shop before fleeing the scene.

"The owner of the shop and his son chased after the suspect, caught him and handed him over to the police," Myburgh said.

It was later discovered that the man's weapon was a toy gun.

The cash from the liquor store was recovered.

The man will appear in the Lichtenburg Magistrate's Court today for business robbery.

In the third incident, the Brits tactical response team arrested a 24-year-old man for the illegal possession of a firearm on Saturday.

"The suspect was arrested after it was reported to the police that a man was seen with a firearm in one of the taverns in Modderspruit.

"When the police arrived at the tavern, the suspect tried to flee but ran out of luck when the police arrested him.

He was found in possession of a 9mm pistol," Myburgh said.

The accused will appear in the Brits Magistrate's Court today for the illegal possession of a firearm.

Motswenyane commended the police and members of the community for working together to fight crime.

She said the arrests would serve as an indication that the police would not hesitate to deal effectively with crime in the province.

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