

Media statement

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ATTENTION: News Editors / Transport Reporters / All Reporters

For immediate use

MINISTER OF TRANSPORT SINDISIWE CHIKUNGA ENGAGED NORTH WEST PROVINCE ABOUT ENHANCING ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

RUSTENBURG: The Minister of Transport, Ms. Sindisiwe Chikunga, undertook a significant visit to the North West Province on Tuesday, 25th July 2023.

The primary objective of the visit was to address concerns surrounding the state of roads and road infrastructure in the province, in line with the government's unwavering commitment to improving road infrastructure.

During this visit, the Minister Chikunga engaged with key stakeholders, including the Premier, Members of the Executive Council, Mayors, and government officials responsible for roads infrastructure.

This engagement in North West was a continuation of similar initiatives undertaken by the Minister since early this year in Free State, Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

Transport Minister and a dedicated team conducted thorough assessments, closely monitored ongoing road projects, and ensured proper oversight of the state of road infrastructure. These efforts came as a direct response to the public's concerns and outcries regarding road conditions across the country.

Transport Minister acknowledged the challenges faced by various authorities in fulfilling their constitutional mandate to provide adequate road maintenance services. In light of this, the Minister proactively intervened and extended support to address these challenges across the networks under their purview.

During the engagement in the North West Province, Minister Chikunga brought attention to the Provincial Roads Maintenance Grant (PRMG) analysis report spanning from the 2013/14 to 2022/23 financial years. With great concern, the Minister highlighted the Province's unfortunate track record of failing to fully utilize the allocated

funding on the grant. Despite seemingly performing above average on a year-on-year basis, the province consistently rolled over funds during the following periods:

- 2018/19: R355 million rolled over
- 2019/20: R296 million rolled over
- 2020/21: No funds rolled over
- 2021/22: R382 million rolled over (R222 million approved, Province has already journalized)

The Minister emphasized that it was essential for allocated funds to be efficiently utilized to address road maintenance needs. The consistent roll-over of significant amounts indicated a need for greater fiscal responsibility and effective resource allocation. This discrepancy underscored the importance of enhancing spending efficiency to meet critical road infrastructure demands.

In light of these findings, the Minister reiterated the importance of prudent financial management and effective utilization of resources to ensure maximum impact on road maintenance and development. Collaborative efforts with the national government and relevant stakeholders were vital in optimizing spending and achieving efficient road networks for the benefit of all citizens.

Following productive discussions, the Ministry, in collaboration with the North West Government, reached pivotal resolutions aimed at elevating the quality of roads for the benefit of citizens. The key agreements included:

- **Implementation of National Pothole Initiative:** The Ministry would intensify the rollout of Operation Valazonke, our national pothole initiative. Timely submission of network data would expedite the resolution of potholes. The public was urged to utilize a unified national app to report potholes efficiently.
- **Transfer of Strategic Roads to SANRAL.** The Province would furnish a comprehensive list of strategic roads marked for transfer to SANRAL. These roads would be officially gazetted as national roads and effectively maintained by SANRAL. Additionally, the list would include rural roads intended for block paving, providing cost estimates and indicating funding availability.
- **Piloting Nano Technology on Rural Roads:** In a groundbreaking step, the Ministry committed to pilot the application of nano-technology on rural roads. This innovative technique reinforced road surfaces, significantly reducing water seepage. The Province would identify suitable roads to commence this pilot program.

- **Private Sector Involvement:** To ensure enhanced road maintenance, the Ministry fostered collaboration with the private sector. Through a structured process, private companies would have the opportunity to adopt and maintain specific roads. The vested interest of mining and logistics companies in preserving the roads they utilized was recognized. Ongoing discussions with SARS were underway to enable tax deductions in accordance with section 18A of the Income Tax Act, rewarding companies investing in road maintenance.
- **Mobilization of Yellow Plant:** To bolster local municipalities in pothole repairs and preventative maintenance, the Ministry would mobilize yellow plant machinery. The Province was committed to procuring the necessary yellow plant equipment.
- **Training and Skills Development:** Prioritizing the training of yellow plant fleet operators was paramount to ensure a pool of qualified professionals. The Ministry would explore collaborations among the Department, the Province, and SANRAL to address capacity constraints and promote skill sharing relevant to road maintenance.
- **Employment and Professional Development:** Addressing unemployment was a core focus. The Ministry would offer opportunities to unemployed graduates, particularly those with engineering qualifications, and actively recruit artisans. Through partnerships with esteemed bodies like the Engineering Council of South Africa and the Transport Education and Training Authority (TETA), they sought to expand training opportunities and deploy a greater number of professionals.
- **Assistance to Municipalities:** They were fully committed to intensifying efforts in supporting municipalities in identifying unproclaimed roads and ensuring uniform road classification procedures across the Province.

By pursuing these proactive measures and fostering collaboration between the government and various stakeholders, they were resolute in their mission to make substantial strides in road infrastructure improvement. Together, they aimed to elevate the driving experience for all citizens, paving the way for a more connected and prosperous South Africa.

The Ministry of Transport remained steadfast in working closely with provincial and local authorities to enhance road infrastructure throughout the country. By harnessing the power of collaborative efforts between various levels of government, they could address road challenges effectively and ensure safe and efficient road networks for all citizens.

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MINISTER OF TRANSPORT

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