



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

TRANSPORT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DIRECTORATE:

Communication

Private Bag X9043, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200

Inkosi Mhlabunzima Maphumulo House, 172 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201

Tel: 033 355 8624 Fax: 033 355 8632

MEDIA RELEASE

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ACTING TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MEC KWAZI MSHENGU INSPECTS COMPLIANCE BY LEARNER TRANSPORT OPERATORS AHEAD OF REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

In preparation for the start of the first term of the 2021 academic year, Acting KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, Mr Kwazi Mshengu this morning led the Provincial Learner Transport inspection programme in Port Shepstone.

MEC Mshengu said the inspection of the Learner Transport Fleet is to ensure that transport services provided to learners complies with road safety guidelines including roadworthiness of all vehicles transporting learners in the province.

The vehicle inspection programme is also aimed at monitoring the Department of Transport and operators' state-of-readiness ahead of schools reopening on 15 February 2021 and to observe adherence to the Covid-19 Regulations under Alert Level 3 on Learner Transport operations.

"This morning we inspected some of the buses and taxis that will be transporting learners as part of the Learner Transport Programme. We have taken a decision that all buses, midi-bus taxis and taxis that will be transporting our learners across the province must all undergo roadworthiness inspection before they hit the road on 15 February because we want to make sure that our learners are safe. Learner Transport is an important aspect of our education system as it is one of the key enablers for learner performance because when learners travel longer distances, they get to school tired and are unable to concentrate which affects their performance. As a caring government, we introduced the Learner Transport programme as part of the interventions to ensure a conducive environment for learning and teaching," said MEC Mshengu.

MEC Mshengu said owing to budgetary constraints the Department was unable to transport all 150 000 learners that need the service in the province and at present about 42 000 learners are provided Learner Transport.

"We have a shortfall in terms of providing Learner Transport to all deserving learners in the province. However, we are unable to extend the programme because of insufficient funding because the only grant that we receive for Learner Transport is R366 million and according to our cost estimates we need just over R 1 billion to provide an effective Learner Transport service. We will continue to request for more funding so that we are able to extend this intervention programme to all the deserving learners," said MEC Mshengu.

MEC Mshengu added that the Learner Transport Policy will be tabled for approval in the next Provincial Executive Council of KwaZulu-Natal meeting chaired by the Premier Sihle Zikalala. He said the policy stipulates the prioritisation model used to identify schools that form part of the Learner Transport Programme in view of the shortage of funding. Some of the considerations include the distance of the school, age group of deserving learners and priority will also be given to disabled learners.

As part of the inspection programme, Learner Transport vehicles underwent roadworthiness testing at the Road Traffic Inspectorate Offices in Port Shepstone to determine whether the vehicles adhere to road safety standards prescribed by the law. MEC Mshengu said he was pleased with the condition of the vehicles inspected after visiting a Black-owned bus fleet company, adding that it was exciting that an African person owned a fleet of about 90 buses.

The Department has monitoring teams in all districts across the province and officials will be working tirelessly to ensure compliance.

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