



**TRANSPORT MINISTRY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, MS SINDISIWE CHIKUNGA, MP ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF CENTRAL LINE FROM THE NYANGA TO LANGA COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE HELD AT LANGA STATION ON 3 APRIL 2023 AT 11H00

- **Deputy Minister, Mr Lisa Mangcu**
- **Provincial Minister for Mobility, Mr Ricardo Mackenzie**
- **Deputy Mayor of the City of Cape Town,**
- **Chairperson of the PRASA Board, Mr Leonard Ramatlakane**
- **Group Chief Executive Officer of PRASA, Mr Hisham Emeran**
- **Stakeholders in attendance**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**

I must start by welcoming the brand new Group Chief Executive Officer of PRASA, Mr Hisham Emeran, who assumed duty on 1 April 2023. Congratulations on your appointment and we have no doubt that you will rise to the occasion not only to recover commuter rail service, but to accelerate the passenger rail modernisation programme.

I equally recognize the presence of MEC Mackenzie and we count on your support to deliver a transport service that is responsive to the needs of the people of the Western Cape. Our predecessors laid down a solid foundation of co-operation and collaboration and I am committed to continue on that path in order to make a better life a lived reality for our people throughout the country.

Restoring passenger rail service in the country is a key priority that will put us back on a path towards the realisation of our long-term objective of positioning passenger rail as the backbone of our public transport system.

Today, we are launching the Langa to Nyanga commuter rail service after closure of over 3 years, and some 40 months ago. This morning we took a train ride from Nyanga to Langa to assess the work that has been done. I am proud to announce that Phase 1 has been completed with the resumption of the service on 20 March 2023.

The Central Line is a strategic corridor that moves a significant number of people and its recovery will ensure that those who rely on commuter rail for their livelihoods will once again be able to access this affordable mode of transport. The devastation that

we experienced on the back of the COVID-19 pandemic in the form of unprecedented theft and vandalism of public assets and the illegal occupation of the line and rail reserve crippled the service and denied many people access to the most affordable mode of public transport.

The Central Line spans over 50 kilometres. In 2011, the line moved in excess of 58 million commuters a year, making it the largest rail corridor in the Cape Metro.

Delivering his State of the Nation Address in 2022, President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasised the importance of recovering our commuter rail services . The central line rehabilitation is an integral part of this process.

In 2021, we set out to recover and restore services in 10 key high-volume corridors that were badly devastated. By December 2022, not only did we achieve our target, but we exceeded it by restoring a total of 13 corridors. To date we have recovered a total of 16 corridors. The latest of these is the Pretoria to Centurion line, that we launched in the past week.

The recovery of the Central Line is being undertaken in phases:

- Phase 1 A: Cape Town to Langa (Via Pinelands)
- Phase 1 B: Langa to Bellville (Via Sarepta)

- Phase 1 C: Langa to Nyanga
- And Phase 2: Nyanga to Chris Hani to Khayelitsha and Kapteinsklip

This phased approach allows PRASA to rebuild and restore train services while the process for the relocation of the illegal occupants on the rail line and reserve is being finalised.

Phases 1A, Cape Town to Langa via Pinelands and Phase 1B, Langa to Bellville via Sarepta were completed in July 2022. Numerous oversight visits in the province were conducted by my predecessor and the work continues under my leadership and guidance.

A lot of work has gone into recovering phases 1A and 1B which included Perway (rail tracks), the replacement of 27 kilometres of Overhead Track Equipment. We must commend PRASA for using its own internal teams for the recovery of perway, including, re-sleepering between Pinelands and Langa, replenishing the ballasts and replacing 125,000 Fasteners and Clips in the first two phases.

The Langa to Nyanga work included re-railing between Bonteheuwel and Heideveld, replacing sleepers that support tracks between Langa and Pinelands, replenishing ballasts on

the Khayelitsha line, and replacing 100 000 Fasteners and Clips that keep the rails intact. A total of 7.5km of overhead equipment that was totally vandalized has since been replaced.

We have set aside a total of R1.2 billion to recover the Central Line. To date, the total work for recovering the rail infrastructure on the Line, including station refurbishments, stands at R642 million, with R420 million spent on the Nyanga to Langa recovery.

I am pleased that our investment in recovering the Central Line is starting to pay dividends. 922 job opportunities have been created, with 475 young people below the age of 35 employed and 22 local SMMEs hired.

The government of the African National Congress is working hard to ensure that we address the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequalities, hence the pressing need to always pursue projects and programme that seek to bring a better life to all citizen of our country. We have been deliberate in ensuring that 51% of the available opportunities were prioritized for the youth, as to positively reduce the non-employment issue experienced more by our young people.

We deliberately focused on contracting SMMEs, because they are important drivers critical to reduce unemployment with the primary aim to ensure that we boost economic growth, create employment and alleviate poverty by ensuring that there is redistribution of wealth, income and opportunities, and to also create a better future for every citizen.

EquProjects like these are a clear demonstration of government's commitment to skills transfer, economic transformation and poverty eradication.

I am also pleased that the Bonteheuwel and Nyanga stations have been partially recovered for basic functionality to allow commuters access the trains. The work to fully recover the stations is ongoing. Ticket offices and ablution facilities have been renovated, passenger shelters have been refurbished, and painting of the platforms and subways completed to enhance customer experience. 20 local SMMEs were hired and 225 jobs created. Work continues at the Heideveld and Netreg stations.

The next step after recovery is to implement universal access for passengers with special needs at the stations. The universal access work requires extensive investment as it entails provision of functional elevators, ramps, platform adjustments (horizontal and vertical), tactile strips, passenger zones, modifications to the

ticket offices and ablution facilities, etc. to promote accessibility of the railway services.

This work will be done under the station modernization programme as the aim would be to improve commuter experience through improved structural capacity, access to the station, creation of commercial opportunities amongst the key interventions.

To safeguard the rail infrastructure, PRASA is rolling out its integrated security plan. On the Central Line, PRASA deployed an intervention unit in October 2022 with huge success. The security strategy also included the integration of communities and creating job opportunities. The intervention unit has created 1354 jobs from various communities along the central line. Of the 1353 jobs created, 320 are women, 567 young people below the age of 35 and 326 elderly people between 58 and 68 years.

The relocation of the illegal settlements on the railway line is the remaining obstacle to the full rehabilitation and restoration of service in the entirety of the Central Line. As was previously communicated, the relocation process will take place in two phases, with Phase 1 being to relocate approximately 1254 structures located near Langa Station, within the railway reserve. Phase 2 of the relocation process is targeting to relocate

approximately 3688 informal dwellers at Philippi Station and 253 illegal dwellers at the Khayelitsha Station.

The relocation process requires an intergovernmental approach that involved all spheres of government, with various committees put in place to ensure the relocation process runs smoothly. A social compact was signed between all the three spheres of government involved and the affected communities.

We will continue working closely with the Department of Human Settlements and the City of Cape Town in ensuring that the relocation process is completed. The Housing Development Agency has been designated as the implementing agent for the relocation process and responsible for the management and coordination of the dignified relocation of communities, and will need the necessary support of the City of Cape Town and other stakeholders.

We are now focusing on Phase 2 of the recovery programme, which entails the recovery of the Nyanga to Chris Hani segment as well as Nyanga to Khayelitsha and Kapteinsklip. The recovery of these lines will take longer because of the illegal occupation on the sections and the extensive damage to infrastructure. However, we are determined to ensure that this work is completed by the end of this financial year.

In conclusion, I must commend the PRASA team for the hard work they have put in the recovery of commuter rail service across the country. We must draw lessons from experiences in the corridors we have already recovered and replicate best practices.

I thank you.