

MAIN APPROPRIATION BUDGET DEBATE SPEECH 2026/27
MOBILITY – VOTE 8
MINISTER ISAAC SILEKU
TUESDAY, 24 MARCH 2026

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Deputy Speaker

Honourable Premier

Honourable Cabinet colleagues

Honourable Members of this House

Molweni, goeie middag, good afternoon.

Honourable Speaker,

Mobility is often reduced to transport - as buses, trains, and taxis.

But in reality, mobility is what enables the state to function and society to thrive.

It is what allows an ambulance to reach a patient in time to save a life.

It is what ensures a learner attending a special needs school can travel safely and consistently each day.

It is what enables a social worker to reach vulnerable households, to intervene, to protect, and to care.

It is also what enables our traffic officers to stand on the frontlines –

intercepting crime, combating human trafficking, and protecting the most vulnerable.

And it is what allows them to implement critical roadblocks to contain Foot and Mouth Disease, safeguarding our agricultural sector and food security.

Mobility is the invisible backbone of service delivery.

It connects departments.

It enables frontline workers.

And it determines whether government reaches the people it serves.

Without mobility, healthcare slows down, education becomes inaccessible, and social services cannot reach those most in need.

That is why this department is not only about moving people - it is about enabling government to deliver, enabling access, and enabling society to function.

Today, it is my honour and privilege to table the R3.5 Billion budget for Vote 8.

And it is for this reason that today, I want to begin with a simple but powerful announcement.

We are expanding our renowned **Jobseeker Travel Voucher Programme**.

For many jobseekers, the cost of getting to an interview can be the difference between staying unemployed and finding work.

Building on the success of the Jobseeker Travel Voucher Programme in Cape Town, and in partnership with George Municipality, we will expand it to George in 2026.

Approximately, 7,500 jobseekers will be provided with free travel on all GO GEORGE bus routes.

These include residents of Thembaletu, Pacaltsdorp, Blanco and Lawaakamp, just to name a few.

The programme uses a simple self-registration process, enabling eligible residents to access free public transport.

By removing transport costs as a barrier, the programme will help residents to pursue work and access economic opportunities.

This programme does one simple but powerful thing - it removes the cost of getting to opportunity.

And the results speak for themselves:

- To date, 35% of beneficiaries have secured employment; and
- Almost all (95%) say that the vouchers made a real difference in their quest for employment.

This is not theory.

This is mobility changing lives directly.

Speaker,

The R3.5 billion budget is an investment in dignity, access, and opportunity.

As we continue to invest in daily mobility, **R1.3 billion** will be allocated to the Golden Arrow Bus Services (GABS) to continue subsidising 230 000 commuters daily.

The service connects communities such as Khayelitsha, Gugulethu, Mitchells Plain, Elsies River and Strand to places of work, education and opportunity.

Now focussing on rural mobility, GO GEORGE continues to be a trailblazer of the Intergrated Public Transport Network (IPTN).

With a **R269 million** allocation for the 2026/27 financial year, we will complete the rollout of Phase 4A routes, expand services to Uniondale, and introduce an airport service, further strengthening connectivity.

Based on current planning and surveys, the Uniondale service will operate four days a week, making approximately 70 – 90 passenger trips weekly.

This introduction of this service is expected to save passengers between R134 000 to R201 000 per annually in transport costs.

Current fiscal constraints in National Conditional Grants continue to threaten flagship projects like GO GEORGE. We are therefore pleased to have received a **R184 million allocation from National Government – reflecting their confidence in the service and its positive multiplier effect.**

Speaker

Mobiliteit verbind gemeenskappe, en die Sentraal-Karoo bly 'n belangrike fokusgebied vir ons.

Die streek se geografie maak mobiliteit uitdagend en ingewikkeld.

Vir baie inwoners beteken dit beperkte vervoeropsies en beperkte toegang tot geleenthede.

Daarom is ons **R2.1 miljoen** belegging in 'n interstedelike landelike vervoersoplossing 'n doelbewuste stap om hierdie ongelykheid aan te spreek.

In vennootskap met die Beaufort-Wes Munisipaliteit sal ons 'n geskeduleerde diens instel wat Nelspoort, Leeu Gamka en Merweville met Beaufort-Wes verbind.

The service will include reduced fares for passengers to improve affordability, alongside enhanced service and safety standards to ensure reliable and dignified journeys.

This is a small but meaningful step, serving as a proof of concept that can be expanded as resources allow.

Speaker, non-motorised transport continues to play a vital role, especially in rural communities, where it complements existing public transport and helps bridge gaps in mobility.

We have therefore developed a proposal for a Non-Motorised Transport Demonstration Town, designed to provide rural communities with safer, more accessible, and connected NMT networks.

Over 3,240 bicycles have been distributed.

Because for many, a bicycle is not a lifestyle choice – it is a lifeline.

We will expand this programme and advance plans for an NMT Demonstration Town.

Speaker, universal accessibility is not a nice-to-have, but a necessity for a thriving province.

All residents of the province, regardless of their abilities, should have free and equal access to public transport.

That is why our **R10 million** allocation to the Dial-A-Ride service is critical and reflects our commitment to dignity.

Speaker, now turning our attention to the dynamic mini-bus taxi industry:

The industry continues to fulfil a critical service, connecting communities both locally and interprovincially.

It provides unscheduled services and remain on the frontlines of public commuting.

Despite its critical role, violence, intimidation, extortion, illegal operators, and route invasions continue to dominate its public image.

This negative narrative not only undermines government efforts to formalise the industry but also impacts law-abiding taxi operators who are simply trying to support their families.

It is against this background that we are taking a stronger stance against violence.

Violence has no place in the industry.

It places children, commuters, small businesses at taxi ranks at great danger.

In the coming weeks, I will make pronouncements on how we, together with other law enforcement agencies, plan to combat violence in the mini-bus taxi industry.

In the 2026/27 financial year, we will incrementally roll out the Taxi Academy, which will commence the registration drivers and provide training in driving and customer care.

Drivers are frontline service providers, and we must empower them to drive responsibly; follow the rules of the road, and provide dignified customer service to every commuter.

All our efforts to change the image of the industry will fall short without its buy-in.

That is why the SANTACO leadership is a critical partner, and why we must strengthen this relationship.

With the upcoming SANTACO elective conference in April 2026, I look forward to working with the incoming leadership to advance reforms.

Mini-bus taxi reforms will not happen overnight, but together with the industry and other partners, it is possible.

But we are also clear on this:

There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Tailored solutions are essential, and they must be co-created with the industry.

Speaker, now turning to passenger rail, the backbone of public transport.

Passenger rail is recovering, with numbers increasing significantly.

We welcome that all 121 stations are now operational.

This is real progress, but reliability and safety still remain major challenges.

Residents need trains they can rely on – every day, on time, and safe.

That is the standard we must meet.

That is why my ongoing engagements with PRASA, at both National and Regional levels, are focused on repositioning passenger rail as the backbone of public transport.

Passenger rail remains a lifeline for many thousands of residents, offering an efficient mode of travel.

Beyond moving residents, passenger rail is crucial in easing congestion on our roads and promoting more sustainable, environmentally friendly urban mobility.

While there is still considerable work to be done to improve reliability and frequency of services, the progress achieved thus far is commendable.

A great example is how the passenger numbers have significantly risen to over 34 million in the current financial year, a far cry from the 2 million passengers in the 2021/22 financial year.

This is a clear indication that our rail network is regaining the trust of the public and claiming its rightful place as the backbone of public transport.

Speaker, mobility is not only about people – it is about goods.

It is about moving an economy.

And increasingly, it is about something more - it is about resilience.

Across the world, freight and logistics systems are under pressure like never before.

Geopolitical instability is disrupting trade routes.

Conflict and uncertainty are increasing costs, delays, and risk.

Climate events and shifting trade patterns are exposing weaknesses in global supply chains.

What was once seen as a support function is now recognised for what it truly is - a strategic asset.

Countries and regions that get logistics right will not only grow - they will endure.

Those that do not will fall behind.

South Africa is not immune to these pressures.

While we have seen improvements in port performance in both Durban and Cape Town, challenges remain:

Congestion

Weather disruptions

Operational inefficiencies

And across our road and border networks, pressure continues to build during peak periods.

This is the reality we must respond to.

Honourable Speaker,

Our response in the Western Cape is clear:

We are not reacting - we are preparing.

We are not patching - we are building.

With our **R3 million** allocation, we are strengthening a logistics system that is modern, resilient, and fit for the future.

By:

- Advancing the Overberg Freight Rail Business Case
- Investing in freight rail revitalisation
- Expanding the Freight Demand Model
- Piloting the RTMS Digital Toolkit

Because when goods move efficiently, the economy grows.

Speaker, every life lost on our roads is one too many.

We are investing **R80 million** in advanced diagnostic scanners to strengthen enforcement.

But road safety is not only about enforcement.

It is about vigilance.

It is about preparedness.

It is about the men and women who stand on the frontlines every day to protect our communities.

Our traffic officers continue to play a critical role beyond the roadway.

Speaker, a mobility system is only as strong as the people who run it.

We are investing **R672 million** in people, skills, and a human rights-based approach to mobility.

Our officials are the backbone of this department.

When we invest in our people, we are investing in delivery.

And that investment is reflected in the Western Cape Government's recognition as a Top Employer for four consecutive years.

But this is not about accolades.

It is about building a professional, capable, and committed public service that can meet the needs of a growing province.

Because at the heart of every functioning system are people who care, and people who deliver.

Part of this allocation will be used to recruit a new cohort of traffic cadets.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank every traffic officer who stepped forward to support efforts to combat Foot and Mouth Disease.

Time and again, our officers go beyond the call of duty.

They are not only enforcing the law – they are protecting our economy, supporting public health, and safeguarding our communities.

The men and women in blue are often the unsung heroes of our province.

Through the Chief Directorate: Traffic Management, I want to express my sincere appreciation to what I firmly believe are the finest traffic law enforcement officers in the country.

They plan, deliver, and keep the system moving - often under immense pressure.

Government Motor Transport

With a **R1.7 billion** budget, GMT, our self-funded Trading Entity, will modernise the fleet and invest in new energy vehicle infrastructure.

Because government must lead by example.

Conclusion

Honourable Speaker,

Mobility is what allows government to serve.

It is what allows residents to live with dignity.

It is what allows opportunity to reach every corner of our province.

This budget is a plan to make that a reality.

I thank you.

Acknowledgements

My sincere appreciation to the Premier and Cabinet colleagues.

To the Standing Committee on Mobility – thank you for the robust interactions, they keep us on our toes and ensure that we continue to push boundaries.

To the Department, under Acting HOD Ms Deidre Ribbonaar, thank you for your dedication and passion for Mobility. To the outgoing HOD, Ms. Hamida Fakira-Du Toit, *in absentia*, I would like to wish you all the very best as you enter this new chapter of retirement.

To my Ministry team, thank you for your support and hard work.

Last, but not least, to my family, thank you for your unwavering love and support.

Honourable Speaker, I thank you.