

Public transport is essential for true reform

By Sello Seitlholo MP – DA Member on the Portfolio Committee on Transport

House Chair,

Honourable Minister,

Less than a month ago, South Africa was embarrassed with the collapse of a Bus Station Roof in Rustenburg. Locally, officials scrambled around and tried to offer comfort with the message that this Bus Terminus was not in use, under construction and that no one was hurt.

While the Department of Transport (DoT) and other stakeholders wished for the dust to simply settle on this matter, commuters still struggling to access quality public transport. Fathers wish to get to work, mothers dream of safely welcoming their kids back from school and youngsters hope to explore places they have only heard of from others.

Minister, we cannot simply turn the page – the Democratic Alliance (DA) regards Public Transport as one of the most important reform essentials.

Coming from the North West Province, I am ashamed to note the disappointment people face against the promises of what was said to be delivered in the form of a Bus Rapid Transport programme for Rustenburg. From the explanations, Minister, it might be true that no one was hurt and that the work was stopped as far back as 2017. What cannot be walked away from, is the fact that millions were spent, contractors received money and yet, no busses are running, and our communities remain disconnected to schools, work and recreation.

While many might view the collapsed station as a small incident, it should be regarded as a failure to our people. In your view, Minister, it might only be considered a poor choice in contractor, but in the DA's view, this represents irresponsibility and complete disregard for the hard tax contributions made by mothers, fathers, my own sister and brother - and it is not acceptable.

Numbers and facts reveal that since the start of the Rustenburg Bus Project in 2005, more than three R3 billion was transferred from this ANC controlled Transport Department to the ANC controlled Municipality, with nothing to show for it.

In conclusion, House Chair, the DA has demanded site visits to every BRT project in South Africa. With more than R40 billion changing hands from one department to thirteen councils, we need to be shown tangible evidence of value and change.

I thank you.