

16 FEBRUARY 2022

THE MOTION SEEKS TO DISCUSS, DEBATES THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT INDUSTRY DURING PERIODS OF STATE OF EMERGENCY AND TO SEEKS TO AGREE ON MEASURES TO AID SUCH INDUSTRY DURING PERIODS OF STATE OF EMERGENCIES. IT FURTHER SEEKS TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF ILLEGAL OR UNAUTHORIZED ROAD TRANSPORTATION OF PASSENGERS OVER VARIOUS LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARIES.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members

It is clear that Covid-19 will be with us for longer than expected. Although not a high number of deaths were reported during the initial outbreak in 2020, Namibia and its nation has suffered during the 2021 winter season with more than 3400 deaths reported. (End August 2021) The corona virus outbreak continues to have an impact on all of us, as new cases become known every day in Namibia and different countries around the world. It is clear from statistics that covid-19 cases increase during winter time in Namibia. The introduction of strict regulations to protect Namibian lives during winter months in Namibia is of utmost importance. It would be sensible to revisit measures and regulations that governs the public transport sector during periods of state of emergencies. (Lockdown)

### CHALLENGES IN THE TRANSPORT INDUSTRY

Hon Speaker, Hon Members, The Public Transport Sector in Namibia is a major role player in the Namibian economy and has suffered tremendously during the past months, especially during lockdown periods. The restrictions put in place to limit the diffusion and impact of Covid-19 had a widespread impact on people's lives in 2021 and the Public Transport Industry *in particular*.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members, the impact of Covid-19 has led to the implementation of strict regulations by Governments across the globe. The Namibian Public Transport Sector was not excluded. The reduction of passengers transported at any given time between various destinations unfortunately, resulted in that some

**REGISTERED TRANSPORT OPERATORS** were forced to relinquish busses, bought through commercial banks as they could not continue with installments. The amendment of measure on short notice, especially during the middle of the month, further resulted in chaos at some loading terminals as some passengers were left stranded.

Hon Speaker, Hon Members, passenger transport is essential for the country hence the towns of Rehoboth, Okahandja and Groot –Aub is more influenced by the decision-making processes as many commutes between these towns and Windhoek on a daily basis. Restrictions during Regional lock downs have uncovered challenges, as some regulations seems to be impractical when it comes to implementation.

Regulations introduced should not be regarded as punitive but rather as helpful instead, as it is in efforts to save lives. However, such regulations have caused the collapse of many small and medium businesses, which resulted in job losses and pay cuts in some industries.

**Hon Speaker, Hon Members**

Public transport plays a huge role in local and regional economic outputs and is therefore an essential service to be maintained as long as reasonable. **In order, to best serve the needs of the sector during this pandemic, Namibia needs a detailed set of guidelines for public transport operators to soften the burden of COVID-19” on the industry.**

These guidelines need to be prepared in line with measures and regulations by Government to address the spread of the covid-19 outbreak and they should aim to assist public transport operators in having business stability plans responding to the specific challenges of communicable diseases.

**Hon Speaker, Hon Members**

Some measures have opened a loophole for **pirate operations** to get entry into the industry. Apart from the impact of covid-19 on the sector, the industry faces some other challenges such as unfair competition from ``pirate transport operators``. The illegal or unauthorized transportation of passengers by private vehicles and ``seven seaters`` have further destabilize the industry. It is clear that certain sections of the Road Transportation Act, 74 of 1977 are violated in particular Sections 21(3) (e) and 24(2)(a)(b). Sections 21(3) (e) states ``The conveyance of persons by means of a motor car for reward will only be within any portion of the area of jurisdiction of any local authority`` Section 24(2)(a)(b) states that the permit holder not be authorized or exempted to operate over the boundary of any local authority area``.

Furthermore, it is alleged that **registered transport operators** receive harsh treatment from law enforcement agencies, whilst at the same time it is alleged that the very same law enforcement agencies are very lenient to **``pirate transport operators``**. I had the opportunity to attend several meetings with some of the role players in the transport sector



over the past few months, the last being on Sunday, 06 February 2022. During these meetings members present, repeatedly accent to the fact that they at all times respect measures implemented to save guard lives but that the attitude of ``pirate transport operators`` has caused chaos in the sector. **The current state of affairs warrant urgent intervention.** Apart from the financial distress suffered by registered transport operators, they are now faced with daily treats by some armed ``pirate transport operators`` between Rehoboth and Windhoek.

**Hon Speaker, Hon Members**

Safety is a top priority for everyone working in, and using, public transport and registered role-players represented by NABTA are prepared to work with Government to ensure the safety of passengers.

Public transport systems are essential for every town and city to ensure mobility and continued organized save public transport services which is therefore vital to all of us. **(Question on seven Seaters)**

**Hon Speaker, Hon Members**

**It is clear that some measures introduced by Government in the Public Transport Sector have not been effective and therefore needs to be reviewed, before we enter the 2022 winter season.**

Detailed recommendations on preparedness, personal protection, and reduction of contact, travel advice and proper communication are needed between the public transport sector and government when measures are considered and before its announcement. Good practices and recommendation are important when concerns are raised over new outbreaks and what they mean for the Public Transport Industry, Namibia and the outside world.

**Recommendations**

**That**

- 1. Government/line Ministry coordinates with stake holders in the Public Transport Industry when considering inputs to the national covid-19 response plan.** (Representatives in the industry claim that there is no or little communication from the line Ministry when approached to address problems in the sector).
- 2. Government/line Ministry comes clear on the operation of pirate operators, which includes seven seaters and private cars operating for reward over boundaries of various local authorities.**

3. The line Ministry and Law enforcement ( NamPol, City Police, Special Field force) meets with role players in the transport industries to seek solutions towards the implementations of regulations during lockdowns and state of emergencies.
4. In the light of the importance public transport section and the essential services roles it plays, Government considers as a matter of emergency, financial support during periods of lockdown to registered operators who are affiliated to recognized transport unions.
5. The implementation of an information system that links the traffic information systems to that of the Ministries of Works and Transport and Finance in order to ensure ``Legal Transport Operators`` contributes to the fiscus but at the same time also identify pirate operators in the transport industry and to take appropriate action.
6. That the City of Windhoek provide proper terminals to long distance passenger transport operators, as some of the current ones no more caters for the need of the sector.

To conclude I move that this Motion be reverred to a relevant Standing Committee of Parliament for proper consultation with the relevant stake holders and to report back to this Assembly.

**I thank you**