

Minister on implementation of Covid-19 regulations

30 April 2020 - Chairperson: Minister on implementation of Covid-19 regulations; with Deputy Minister

Meeting Summary

Video: [JM: PC on Transport & SC on Transport, Public Service & Administration, Public Works & Infrastructure Part 2](#)

Audio: [Minister on implementation of Covid-19 regulations](#)

[COVID-19: Regulations and Guidelines - Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002](#)

In light of the nationwide lockdown brought on by the prevalence of COVID-19 in the country, the Department of Transport (DoT) briefed the Committee on the response from the transport sector with regard to its adherence to the regulations in place both before and during the nation-wide lockdown. This included feedback on vehicle movement compliance and accountability; public transport offences and related arrests; the transport of essential goods, essential employees, petroleum products, and goods from ports and mine workers; health and safety standards in public transport; and for civil aviation aspects, including repatriations and passenger evacuations.

South Africa's hard lockdown would end on 1 May, and South Africa would then enter a phased-in approach to a soft lockdown, where the stringency of measures would be determined by the lockdown alert level being implemented. With the Level 4 lockdown coming into effect from 1 May, the DoT outlined the measures that would remain in place, and those that would be relaxed during the phased-in approach to reducing the levels. This included a briefing on the implementation of adjusted and less stringent measures for the maritime, rail, public and road transport branches.

Members' concerns were centred on one main question -- how would the DoT ensure the safety of the increased number of passengers using public transport? The distribution of adequate hygiene and cleaning supplies to every area of transport in the sector was needed. The sector had struggled to manage public and rail transport even before the pandemic, and those issues had been worsened by the state of emergency it was facing. Another serious concern involved the enforcement of the new regulations, as the measures would be futile if they were not enforced adequately. The Committee also stressed the importance of ensuring that all communications and health-related information be provided in all the official languages of the country.

The DoT outlined the way forward by stating that evidence-based modelling was needed to measure the risk of transmission. Testing and objective criteria were required for determining what classified as 'essential' goods or services. The redesigning of workspaces and public spaces, and the hygiene and safety of everyone, was paramount. The Department expressed its commitment to the redesign of business models, artificial intelligence, digital channels and telecommunications, the redesign of transport and logistic norms or practices, the use of protective gear such as gloves and masks, and adherence to hygienic practices.

Meeting report

The Chairpersons jointly opened the meeting and welcomed the Members, the delegation from the Department of Transport (DoT) and members of the media and public.

The purpose of the meeting was for the DoT to brief the Committee on the response from the transport sector on its adherence to the regulations in place before and during the nation-wide lockdown. In light of the enforcement of a level 4-lockdown from 1 May, the DoT had also been invited to outline the measures that would remain in place after the hard lockdown, and those that would be relaxed in the transport sector during the phased-in approach to relaxing the lockdown.

The delegation from the DoT consisted of Mr Fikile Mbalula, Minister of Transport; Ms Dikeledi Magadzi, Deputy Minister of Transport, and Mr Alec Moemi, Director General (DG).

Introduction by Minister

Minister Mbalula said that the DoT had always been mindful that transport was not only an enabler of economic activity and social mobility, but also a potent instrument capable of spreading the COVID-19 virus far and wide. After all, the aviation sector had brought the virus to the shores of South Africa. The duty of the DoT now was to

ensure that the mobility of the virus through our transport system was stopped dead in its tracks, or at the very least slowed down dramatically.

Measures implemented before and during lockdown

Mr Moemi outlined the response from the transport sector regarding its adherence to the regulations in place before and during the nationwide lockdown. This included feedback on vehicle movement compliance and accountability; public transport offences and related arrests; the transport of essential goods, essential employees, petroleum products, and goods from ports and mine workers; health and safety standards in public transport; and for certain civil aviation aspects (including repatriations and passenger evacuations).

Vehicle movement compliance and accountability

In the area of vehicle movement compliance and accountability, law enforcement agencies had mounted daily static roadblocks on major routes across the country. Traffic officers had been executing their regular traffic law enforcement duties as well as the newly implemented COVID-19 transport regulations in suburbs, townships, the entrances and exit points of provinces, taxi ranks and ports of entry. The Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) control room served as the central point for collation, validation and dissemination of traffic and transport-related reports and activities on a daily basis across the country.

Between 26 March and 24 April 2020, law enforcement had performed the following: K78 roadblocks (2 414); vehicles stopped and checked (547 298); notices issued (34 582); vehicles discontinued (800); vehicles impounded (963); pedestrians arrested (335); and other arrests made for the serious violation of the lockdown transport regulations (2 451). An analysis of the adherence and implementation of the transport regulations demonstrated that the movement of vehicles on the roads had reduced dramatically. There had been a spike during the Easter weekend, which had persisted. The roadblocks and other measures enforced by the law enforcement agencies had gone a long way in enforcing the regulations and the general traffic laws.

Gauteng had reported the highest number of vehicles stopped and checked (122 872), and North-West had reported the lowest number (1 413). The other provinces reported the number of vehicles that had been stopped and checked by law enforcement. These were Limpopo (94 010); Eastern Cape (88 317); KwaZulu-Natal (85 663); Mpumalanga (84 192); Northern Cape (32 157); Western Cape (27 864); National Traffic Police (NTP) (6 989); and Free State (3 821).

The NTP had reported the highest number of vehicles discontinued (278), and the Free State had reported the lowest number (three). The other provinces reported the number of vehicles that were discontinued as KwaZulu-Natal (204); Mpumalanga (114); Eastern Cape (84); Gauteng (74); Limpopo (19); Western Cape (19) and the Northern Cape (five).

Mpumalanga reported the highest number of vehicles impounded (399), and KwaZulu-Natal and the Road Traffic Infringement Agency (RTIA) jointly reported the lowest number (0). The other provinces reported the number of vehicles that were impounded: these were the Free State (201); Limpopo (122); Gauteng (94); NTP (66); Eastern Cape (53); North-West (24); and the Western Cape (two).

The DoT presented a breakdown of the number of arrests per province between 26 March and 24 April and the reason for the arrests. The NTP reported the highest number of arrests (1 073), and the Northern Cape reported the lowest (one). The arrests reported by the other provinces were Gauteng (662); Limpopo (229); Free State (157); KwaZulu-Natal (112); Mpumalanga (68); Eastern Cape (44); and the Western Cape (two). In total, 2 451 arrests were made. There were 67 cases of drunken driving (2.73%); seven cases of driving without a licence (0.28%); 31 cases of speeding (1.26%); seven cases of overloading goods (0.28%); one case of overloading passengers (0.04%); eight cases of reckless and negligent actions (0.32%); 183 cases of permit-related offences (7.46%); 124 warrants were executed (5.05%); 20 cases of people presenting false documentation to law enforcement (0.81%); and 2 003 arrests relating to other matters (81.7%). In addition, 2 011 public transport offences were reported because of overcrowded buses (seven instances) and minibus taxis (2 004 instances).

Transportation of essential employees

A set of directions had been issued in terms of Regulation 10(7) under section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 (DMA), which enabled the provision of public transport to employees and businesses categorised as essential workers, including mine workers.

Section 11(C) of the regulations allowed such transport on the condition that bus services, taxi services, e-hailing services, and private motor vehicles were permitted to transport passengers only for purposes of rendering essential services, obtaining essential goods, seeking medical attention, funeral services and to receive payment of grants.

Section 6(3) of the directions stipulates that public transport that shall be permitted to ferry essential services workers would operate only between 05h00 to 10h00, and again between 16h00 and 20h00. Minibus taxis were

permitted to proceed to a pickup point an hour before the operating times without loading; and allowed to leave drop-off points an hour after the scheduled end time.

Transportation of petroleum products:

Petroleum products were transported -- including transport from production sites, refineries, storage facilities and to service stations -- by various vessels through 207 movements of the products. The transportation of petroleum products fell under the domain of the Department of Mineral Resources, but also under the DoT, as it was transported on our roads. The major petroleum products that were sold in South Africa were petrol, diesel, jet fuel, illuminating paraffin, fuel oil and liquefied gas (LPG). Petrol and diesel were the major liquid fuels that were used in South Africa. Petroleum products were moved from refineries by pipelines (as well as using rail, sea and road transport) to approximately 200 depots, 4 600 service stations and 100 000 direct consumers (mostly farmers).

As at 21 April, the South African Petroleum Industry Association (SAPIA) confirmed that there would be no shortage of diesel, jet fuel, illuminating paraffin, lubricants, and petrol during the lockdown period. However, despite revised Regulations for the extended lockdown period, which indicated that some sectors could resume work, not all refineries were able to operate at full capacity at this stage as the industry had experienced a demand decline of close to 60% since the start of the lockdown. SAPIA had confirmed that the decrease in demand had resulted in excess product and limited storage capacity, that not all these decisions had put the security of supply at risk, and that most petroleum products would be supplied as per the demand.

Transportation of essential and other goods from ports:

Regulations had been issued and published on 18 March in terms of the National Ports Act 12 of 2005 (NPA), to place restrictions on the movement of persons and crews at our ports. These regulations allowed for the loading and off-loading of cargo at all South African ports. The transportation of essential goods from the port terminals was subject to strict COVID-19 containment protocols of sanitisation of the received cargo before it was transported to the intended destinations. There were no reported incidents of any violation of the containment measures in the movement of essential cargo from ports during the lockdown. The lockdown regulations were clear in relation to the movement of cargo from the ports, in that only essential cargo was allowed to move to its intended destination. The other cargo was stacked in the terminal for distribution after the lockdown.

The regulations by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) from 2 May, introduced flexibility to allow the movement of non-essential cargo in port terminals as a means to decongest the ports of entry. SARS had issued an update on customs measures related to COVID-19, the intention of which was to address the movement of non-essential cargo to their destinations. Imported cargo, with the exception of liquor, may be transported from ports of entry to warehousing sites, to be distributed after the lockdown; and the export of cargo was allowed to decongest our ports.

Essential goods refer to the items listed in terms of the CoGTA regulations and include certain goods, cleaning and hygiene products, medical products and fuel. Goods refer to any food, any food product including non-alcoholic beverages, animal food, and any auxiliary products used in the production of any food product. Cleaning and hygiene products include hand sanitisers, disinfectants, alcohol for industrial use, household cleaning products and personal protective equipment (PPE), products for the care of babies and toddlers, and personal toiletries (including hair care, body and face washes, roll-on, deodorants and toothpaste). Medical products include any medical or hospital goods, medications and ancillary products. Fuel products include petroleum products, coal, wood, gas, and other related products.

Health and safety standards in public transport:

The purpose of the directions issued under section 27(2) of the DMA was to provide for the improved hygiene control and disinfection of facilities on all public transport vehicles and public transport facilities, including ranks, terminals and train stations; and to provide for the implementation of a monitoring and enforcement system in all public transport facilities.

Three main measures would be implemented in public transport:

- distribution of PPE;
- implementation of facility and passenger hygiene; and
- adherence to the principle of social distancing

For the distribution of PPE, masks, gloves and other protective gear were distributed to all provinces for drivers and marshals in the taxi industry to reduce infection rates. The facility and passengers would be expected to adhere to hygienic standards, and hand sanitisers and disinfectants were distributed. Operators were required to deep clean and disinfect their vehicles at the end of a day's shift. The principle of social distancing had to be adhered to, minibus taxis were allowed to carry only a maximum of 70% of their licensed passenger capacity,

and buses were allowed to carry only a maximum of 50%. Social distancing had also to be maintained at public transport facilities, such as in queues, and should be enforced by the industry through rank marshals.

Various materials had been distributed to the taxi industry in all the provinces. These included 20 fogging machines to dispense disinfectants, 1 200 vehicle disinfectant sprays, 1 200 chemical 20-litre bottles which could be used as disinfectant bases, 160 000 sanitisers in 1-litre bottles, 2 400 sanitisers in 20-litre bottles, 1 000 PPEs, 580 000 masks and 800 000 boxes of latex gloves.

Aviation: Overflights or allowances for landing clearance

Landing clearance was granted for non-commercial flights overflying the South African airspace for maintenance, such as technical stops or refuelling, medical service flights (Medivec), and diplomatic and exempted flights, although no such flights were approved). To date, 60 Medivec movements, 106 repatriation movements, 114 evacuation movements, and 12 movements of mortal remains had been completed.

Measures after the hard lockdown

In light of the enforcement of a level 4-lockdown from 1 May, the DoT also outlined the measures that would remain in place after the hard lockdown, and those that would be relaxed in the transport sector during the phased-in approach to relaxing the lockdown. This included a briefing on the implementation of adjusted and less stringent measures for the maritime, rail, public transport and road transport branches.

Overview of COVID-19 alert levels:

The DoT was also invited to outline the measures that would remain in place after the hard lockdown, and those that would be relaxed in the Transport sector during the phased-in approach to relaxing the lockdown. The DG outlined the plans for the phased introduction of public transport in the five levels of lockdown.

During level five, certain transport, storage and communication services were permitted. Rail, ocean, and air transport was permitted only for the shipment of cargo. Taxis, buses and e-hailing services were allowed to operate subject to stringent restrictions on capacity, and only during the times and for the activities permitted. The transport and logistics regarding specific cargo and permitted retail goods to neighbouring countries were permitted, which included all goods imported via our ports of entry for export to our neighbours.

During level four, certain transport, storage and communication services were permitted. Ocean and air transport were permitted only for the shipment of cargo. Public rail transport, minibus taxis and bus services would resume at levels and on terms as would be set out in the directions, based on the progressive increase in commuter numbers during the various phases. The transport and logistics regarding specific cargo and permitted retail goods to neighbouring countries were permitted, which included all goods imported via our ports of entry for export to our neighbours. Essential imported goods would be prioritised through our ports of entry and for transport and handling to final users. Directions would be issued in respect of other goods. Some limitations from level five would remain in effect.

During level three, certain transport, storage and communication services were permitted. Limited domestic air travel would be allowed, but restrictions would be placed on the number of flights per day and the authorisation of flights would be based on the reason for travel and the arrangements at the entries of ports. Ocean transport was permitted only for the shipment of cargo. Public rail transport, minibus taxis and bus services would resume at levels and on terms as would be set out in the directions, based on the progressive increase in commuter numbers during the various phases. E-hailing services would be subjected to restrictions on capacity and times, and only for certain permitted activities. The transport and logistics regarding specific cargo and permitted retail goods to neighbouring countries were permitted, which included all goods imported via our ports of entry for export to our neighbours. Essential imported goods would be prioritised through our ports of entry, and for transport and handling to final users. Directions would be issued in respect of other goods. Some limitations from level four would remain in effect.

During level two, certain transport, storage and communication service were permitted. All air travel and ocean transport was permitted. Public rail transport, minibus taxis and bus services would resume at levels and on terms as would be set out in the directions, based on the progressive increase in commuter numbers during the various phases. E-hailing services would be subjected to restrictions on capacity and times, and only for certain permitted activities. The transport and logistics regarding specific cargo and permitted retail goods to neighbouring countries were permitted, which included all goods imported via our ports of entry for the export to our neighbours. Essential imported goods would be prioritised through our ports of entry and for transport and handling to final users. Directions would be issued in respect of other goods. Some limitations from level three would remain in effect.

During level one, most transport, storage and communication service were permitted. All air travel and ocean transport was permitted. Public rail transport, minibus taxis and bus services would resume at levels and on terms as would be set out in the directions, based on the progressive increase in commuter numbers during the

various phases. E-hailing services would be subjected to restrictions on capacity and times, and only for certain permitted activities. The transport and logistics regarding specific cargo and permitted retail goods to neighbouring countries were permitted, which included all goods imported via our ports of entry for export to our neighbours. Essential imported goods would be prioritised through our ports of entry and for transport and handling to final users. Directions would be issued in respect of other goods.

Maritime branch of transport:

There would be no changes to the directions regulating the movement of ships. The ban on passenger vessels and cruise liners remains in place, and only vessels bringing in cargo were allowed to call on our ports. However, the DoT would allow the movement of cargo from our seaports to either warehouses or final destinations, as provided for in the current rules.

Rail transport branch:

With the gradual resumption of economic activity in certain sectors and permitted movement of freight, the DoT would allow the full resumption of freight rail. Based on the detailed plans submitted by passenger rail operators, commuter rail would resume operations gradually on an incremental basis. Limited services with strict measures to ensure social distancing and other mitigation measures would be introduced. The Gautrain would resume its operations incrementally, covering eight of its nine stations, but there would be no airport service. Long distance trains were still prohibited during lockdown alert level 4.

The Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) would similarly adopt a gradual re-introduction of its services based on its capacity to manage crowds, implement effective social distancing, and implement other mitigation measures that include cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, trains and stations.

PRASA would undertake the compulsory testing of the rolling stock during level 4, and only resume with a limited service once the National Command Council declares the risk adjustment to lockdown alert level 3, with the return of the Pienaarspoort line in Tshwane, and the Southern line in Cape Town.

Civil aviation branch:

The ban on both domestic and international passenger flights remains in place. However, as was already the case, the DoT would continue to allow repatriation flights either bringing back South Africans stranded in foreign countries, or transporting foreign nationals from South Africa. The current approval procedures to permit the departure or landing of such flights remain unchanged. The easing of the lockdown to an alert level 4 meant increased economic activity in sectors that were permitted to resume operations. Due consideration would be given to the mining and agricultural sector to allow limited movement of aircraft, either to transport essential workers by chartered aircraft or to spray pesticides on crops. All these movements would be subject to approval, and permits would be issued on a case-by-case basis. No scheduled domestic flights were permitted.

Public transport branch:

With the easing of the lockdown and more people returning to work, the DoT had revised the operating hours for all road-based public transport modes. All road-based public transport would be permitted to operate from 05h00 until 19h00, with a grace period of one hour in the afternoon to complete their trips and drop off passengers. This included minibus-taxis, buses, metered taxis, e-hailing services, charter and shuttle services. No public transport would be allowed on the road between 20h00 and 05h00. Sanitisation principles currently applicable to public transport vehicles and facilities would remain in place. No person who was not wearing a mask would be allowed to use public transport. The DoT called on the public to ensure strict adherence to this requirement by obtaining their own masks, in line with the CoGTA regulations.

Buses would be allowed to transport passengers to 70% of its overall licensed loading capacity, with the requisite social distancing and other mitigating measures still being implemented. The licensed loading capacity of buses includes both seated and standing passengers. Standing passengers must exercise effective social distancing measures and hygienic practices. Minibus taxis would be allowed to transport passengers to 70% of their overall licensed loading capacity, with the requisite social distancing and other mitigating measures still being implemented. E-hailing and metered taxis would have a loading capacity that remained at 50%, and any five-seater vehicle was permitted to carry only the driver and two passengers.

Shuttle, charter and chauffeur services would be subject to the same rules as other road-based public transport modes, and would be permitted only for the transportation of people undertaking essential work and those economic sectors allowed to return to work under lockdown alert level 4. These services were allowed a loading capacity of only 50% and were permitted to carry only the driver and two passengers. Some companies, particularly in the mining sector, rotate using three work shifts, resulting in employees finishing work outside the permitted public transport operating hours. These companies may make use of charter services, and operators of such vehicles undertaking this service must be identifiable as such for the purposes of law enforcement.

Road transport branch:

Food delivery services, such as Uber Eats, Mr Delivery and similar services, were permitted to operate between 09h00 and 20h00 only for the delivery of food. Driving schools would be permitted to resume their activities, subject to effective social distancing and sanitising measures. Both the driving instructor and the learner must wear masks at all time.

Courier services were permitted to operate for the delivery of essential items such as medicine or medical equipment. It should, however, be noted that the wholesale sector had been allowed to return back to service. Among the sub-sectors allowed to trade was the e-commerce, which includes on-line shopping for non-essential items such as personal information communication technology (ICT) equipment and other goods. This sector was reliant on courier services to deliver its goods to customers at their homes. This would have an implied effect that courier services may operate also for purposes of delivery of goods purchases online.

The servicing of vehicles of personnel performing emergency services was permitted under lockdown alert level 4. This also included the importation of spares for service purposes and for manufacturing. Emergency spares were also allowed to be on sale. Repairs and fitments to emergency and essential service vehicles was permitted. Emergency and roadside assistance services for all were allowed. This also included towing services and support with breakdown of vehicles. Cross-border road passenger movement remained prohibited. Only essential cargo would be allowed to move across our land borders. The South African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on COVID-19 was applicable on cross-border movement. It also detailed the goods that needed to be allowed by member states to move across the country's land borders.

Travel between provinces, metropolitan areas and districts remained prohibited. Concessions would be made in respect of workers who had a permit to perform an essential or permitted service, who had to commute to and from work on a daily basis; and the attendance at a funeral of a close family member, and the transportation of mortal remains. A once-off special provision would be made for any person who was not at their place of residence before the lockdown period and who could not travel between provinces, metropolitan and district areas during the lockdown, to return to their homes.

The way forward

The way forward required evidence-based modelling to measure the risk of transmission. Testing and objective criteria were required for determining what classified as 'essential' goods or services. The redesigning of workspaces and public spaces, and the hygiene and safety of our people, were paramount. Social distancing and hygiene practices had to be adhered to as strictly as possible, and temperature checks and constant sanitising must be implemented. The use of PPE was paramount across all essential services.

The DoT expressed its continued commitment to the redesign of business models, artificial intelligence, digital channels and telecommuting, the redesign of transport and logistic norms or practices, the use of protective gear such as gloves and masks, and adherence to hygienic practices. Minimal human contact had to be continually implemented, and the prohibition on handshakes, hugging and kissing must remain. These measures would be formalised in the directives that would come into effect at the same time that the level 4-lockdown became effective.

Discussion

Mr C Hunsinger (DA) thanked the delegation from the DoT for the work they had done during this challenging period. How would daily travelling and border crossing work, especially in rural areas where people had to go to school, and shops that were closer but in another province? How would people be able to get permission for those activities? In terms of essential services and their cargo allowances, how would cargo that had mixed content of essential and other goods, be treated? The DoT should consider allowing people to access the containers that were not classified as being for essential purposes, and for them not to be subjected to the high tariffs currently enforced. The transport of hazardous goods required additional technicians for safety reasons. In some instances, two or three people were required for such transportation. How would the DoT address the issue of people being fined for violating the lockdown regulations when they were needed for the safety of transporting hazardous goods?

Some of our neighbouring countries followed when South Africa announced a hard lockdown, which resulted in some trucking employees being quarantined in other countries. This was a diplomatic issue, and the DoT had to engage with those countries and reach agreements to bring our citizens home. Our truckers were stopped along the road and sanctioned for transporting goods that were regarded as essential in South Africa, but not as essential goods in our neighbouring countries. Truckers were also struggling to find food while they were in transit -- were we really expecting large trucks to park at the local supermarket to buy food that must still be prepared? Our truckers were the people who distributed all the essential goods people rely on during these troubling times, yet they were not provided with PPE, they struggle to find food, and the process of delivering

their loads was confusing and dangerous. There were also issues with trucks returning empty, which resulted in further fines and truckers being unable to renew their passports.

Regarding the aviation sector, the DoT should consider equipping the airports with spaces where the pilots could rest between their flights. Referring to the agricultural sector, where they were entering the harvesting season, he asked how seasonal workers would be transported during the lockdown period.

Mr M Rayi (ANC, Eastern Cape) requested clarity on the once-off allowance made by the DoT, which allowed any person who was not at their place of residence before the lockdown period and who could not travel between provinces, metropolitan and district areas during the lockdown, to return to their homes. What about workers who were not yet allowed to go to work? Placing a time limit on the operation of the once-off allowance was problematic, as workers who had to return at some point in the future might need the allowance only then.

Mr M Chabangu (EFF) raised an issue relating to the transportation of essential goods. What punitive action was being taken by the DoT when non-compliance with the transport regulations was reported? What precautionary measures had the DoT put in place to ensure the curbing of COVID-19 during the transportation of petroleum products? What mode of transport was used to transport the mineworkers, and what were the safety protocols during the transportation? What plans were in place to sanitise other modes of transport? Due consideration had to be given to the DoT's capacity to implement the measures across all branches and modes of transport.

Mr T Brauteseth (DA, KwaZulu-Natal) referred to the once-off allowance made by the DoT, which was also referenced by Mr Rayi in his questions. The DoT needed to develop a simple permit that people could have with them when they were using this once-off allowance and had to cross provincial borders. Many people had been trapped in another province before the commencement of the hard lockdown and needed to return to their own homes or move into new homes if they had changed residences. Could the DoT consider engaging with removal companies to assist such people? Could sole proprietors get a permit if they were providers of essential services? What capacity was there for the ICT staff to implement social distancing in an online capacity for licensing centres, and perhaps parts of the Department of Home Affairs offices? Relating to the aviation sector, various pilots had been in contact with the Committee to offer mercy flights to rural areas of South Africa to provide assistance. This would be at no cost to the government. Could the DoT engage with those volunteers to provide relief to those citizens who were in remote areas of the country?

Mr L McDonald (ANC) said the DoT had reported that 3 821 vehicles had been stopped and checked in the Free State. There were two major corridors -- the N1 and the N3 -- into the Free State, and only 115 vehicles had been stopped per day, which indicated serious inefficiencies in that area. There was no mention of the preparation for the scholar transport that soon needed to be rolled out for the learners to return to schools. There had been concerned reports from taxi owners and passengers on being equipped with masks and PPE, as they were in dire financial situations. The metro rail between Simon's Town and Cape Town was ready to resume operation. It had been impossible to keep people from climbing on to the trains, hanging on to the sides of the trains, and to prevent them being filled to capacity. How was this going to be controlled if the DoT could not control its capacity? It seemed like a bad idea that needed more consideration before it was implemented.

Ms M Ramadwa (ANC) thanked the DoT for the work they had done so far. It was important that information that was sent out was translated into all official languages so that more people could understand the implications of COVID-19 and be clear about the measures being implemented during any of the alert levels of lockdown.

Mr K Sithole (IFP) enquired about the scholar transport and the opening of schools during the week of 4 May, according to the Department of Basic Education. How would commuters in public transport be sanitised? How was the DoT assisting those who needed supplies or financial aid to get their supplies? Regarding the arrests made by law enforcement for violations of transport regulations, the DoT was requested to explain what the 'other reasons' for the arrests had been, and whether any of them had led to convictions. What were the punitive consequences of the roadblocks? Regarding the repatriation of South African citizens from other countries, the DoT was asked to present an estimate of how many citizens had been repatriated.

Ms N Nolutshungu (EFF) commented on the fact that there would be no rail transport services during lockdown level 4 and proposed that the DoT intensify the enforcement of the regulations across all other modes of transport. The Committee was appealing to the government to ensure that public transport facilities such as taxi ranks were sanitised, and that proper hygienic practices were followed. The minibus taxi operators should be required to keep a register of their passengers in the event that one of them was infected and it was necessary to contact and quarantine the other passengers or people they had been in contact with. Testing facilities had to be established across public transport facilities to ensure that passengers could be tested before they were allowed to board. The DoT had not addressed the use of car hire services, and he suggested it should allow people to use hired cars to be able to travel back to their homes or to their work areas.

Ms H Boshoff (DA, Mpumalanga) sought clarity on the travelling by people across provinces to return to work. Were these people allowed to travel with passengers so that the vehicle could be returned to the province they

departed from? People who travelled regularly between provinces for legitimate reasons could not be expected to get a permit every single day. People from Mpumalanga regularly travelled to Limpopo to work in the mines.

Mr T Mabhena (DA) referred to the once-off allowance that was also referred to by Mr Rayi and Mr Brauteseth in their questions to the DoT. How did this influence the permits being issued only for the travelling to attend a funeral? While the Gautrain did have the capacity to sanitise its facilities properly, it did not carry the bulk of the citizens and workers who were returning to work. Minibus taxis and buses were a concern, as it was a difficult task to sanitise the vehicle properly after just one trip. What plans did the DoT have in place to ensure that hygienic protocols were followed during the busy trips, such as morning and evening commutes?

Chairperson Mmoiemang referred to the delivery of fast food, and enquired whether the drive-through facilities of restaurants would be accessible to the public.

Chairperson Zwane thanked the MPs for raising their questions and concerns and invited Minister Mbalula to raise his concerns or comments, and for Mr Moemi to answer the questions raised by the Members.

DoT's response

Mr Moemi said that the DoT had addressed the issue of the truck drivers. The protocols in place were being utilised to address the concerns of Mr Hunsinger, to provide the truckers with food, adequate documentation and to ensure that they were able to return to South Africa. The borders remained closed, and truckers were permitted to carry only the allowed cargo as indicated in the cargo manifesto. The storage at harbours was expensive, and the need for cargo to remain at the harbour was negated by the new regulations that allowed it to be moved to its appropriate destination. The country was not operating in normal circumstances. The regulations required that abnormal vehicles be accompanied on the road by two other vehicles, for which the costs must be provided for. Companies could rely on their insurance policies for the additional investments they had to make during this period.

Airport crews must be allowed to rest, and there were nearby hotels at the major airports that were being used for that purpose before the crew flew back to their appropriate destinations. The transportation of petroleum products was easy to monitor, as there were only a few refineries in the country, and the statistical information could be provided to the Committee. The permit process for frequent travel between provinces, metropolitan areas and districts, was being finalised by the DoT.

The DoT then addressed the questions relating to the once-off allowance made by the DoT, which allowed any person who was not at their place of residence before the lockdown period and who could not travel between provinces, metropolitan and district areas during the lockdown, to return to their homes. This would be allowed during lockdown alert level 4. This once-off opportunity would apply, and once a person used it, they could not use it again until a decreased lockdown alert level was announced. The Committee should rather engage Ms Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, for full clarity on the nature and the scope of the once-off allowance.

Plans had been put into place to provide cloth masks, sanitisers and PPE, but the DoT was still working with the National Treasury to finalise the process. Regarding the DoT's online registration capacity, there had been no transition to an online format due to the prescribed formats of the road traffic-related legislation that was currently before Parliament for consideration. The DoT had engaged with the Department of Home Affairs to ensure that there would not be a stampede at offices once they reopened. The transactions of essential workers were being prioritised, and other members of the public could book online for their appointments and complete their applications. Traffic, vehicle and driving-related applications were also being facilitated online to promote the principle of social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding the number of vehicles that were stopped and checked in the Free State, the DoT responded that some vehicles were stopped and checked on their way to the province, and were thus recorded under other provinces, such as Gauteng. There were alternate corridors, but the roadblock was jurisdictionally on the side of Gauteng, and the numbers were consequently counted under the statistics provided for Gauteng. On the questions regarding scholar transportation, the DoT was waiting for feedback from the Department of Basic Education on their exact future plans before the transport plans could be outlined.

The DoT had stress-tested their plans to reopen railway transport and had found that they were unready to proceed. It was for this reason that there would be no rail operations during this period, as they would be testing the system, including all lines and rolling stock. On 29 April, PRASA had sent out a statement that some of their lines would be operation, but the statement had been withdrawn after consultation with the DoT. Further testing would be conducted by the DoT to investigate the feasibility of the reopening of the railway.

Regarding the arrests, the outcomes were that vehicles were discontinued, or the operators of the vehicles were fined. Regarding the conviction rate resulting from the arrests, the Committee should rather engage with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, as this was beyond the mandate of the DoT.

Approximately 4 622 citizens had been evacuated and repatriated back to South Africa from various countries, and the breakdown could be found in the presentation.

The permit for inter-provincial travel was quite generic, and was available for emergencies, including funerals. It was the job of the South Africa Police Service (SAPS) or the Magistrates' Office to determine whether an applicant had sufficient grounds to be granted a permit. Compassion and reasonableness were key factors that were considered by the SAPS and the Magistrates' Office when hearing the applications. It was implied in the allowance for the delivery of fast food that drive-through facilities of restaurants would be accessible to the public.

Minister's closing remarks

Minister Mbalula stressed the fact that the lockdown was not over. The National Command Council (NCC) sought to evaluate the situations adequately, and to allow the various departments to make the appropriate regulations. This was an unprecedented situation, and the final decisions would be taken by the Cabinet, which would ensure that the implementation of the NCC's recommendations was legitimate.

The DoT thanked the Committee for their work and their oversight over the DoT during these challenging times.

Chairperson Zwane thanked the DoT delegation for the presentations made and for engaging with the questions and concerns raised by the Members.

The meeting was adjourned.