



**Keynote Address by the Minister of Transport, Hon. Barbara Creecy
Launch of PRASA's Renewable Energy Project, Train Set 300, and Isipingo
Mall**

28 October 2025

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport & Human Settlements, Siboniso Duma

Executive Mayor of the City of eThekweni Cllr Cyril Xaba

PRASA & Intersite Board and Executive Leadership,

Representatives from our labour unions

Representatives from our Developers present today, Partners from industry and civil society, Members of the media, Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is my great pleasure to join you here in the vibrant city of eThekweni, as we celebrate milestones that reflect the new direction of passenger rail in South Africa: the launch of PRASA's Renewable Energy Project, the unveiling of the three-hundredth – *Isitimela Sabantu* (The People's Train), and the official opening of Isipingo Mall.

These achievements are not isolated successes. They are part of a broader, determined effort by the government to rebuild passenger rail as a reliable, efficient, and inclusive mode of transportation that supports the economy, creates jobs, and uplifts communities such as those here in the eThekweni region.

Exactly three weeks ago, PRASA announced its audited annual performance results from the previous financial year. Today, we are witnessing tangible progress that restores confidence in public institutions and reminds us that when we invest wisely in transport infrastructure, we invest directly in the lives of our people.

As we transition towards a modern transport system, sustainability must be at the heart of everything we do. The Solar Renewable Energy Project launched today is one of PRASA's most forward-looking initiatives, spearheaded by its subsidiary Intersite to transform how we power our operations. Across the country, solar power systems are being installed at key PRASA stations and facilities. These systems will reduce the agency's dependence on the national grid, improve operational reliability during power disruptions, and significantly lower the carbon footprint of rail operations.

The true value, however, of this project extends beyond energy efficiency. It represents innovation, resilience, and responsibility, qualities which we want all our public institutions to embody.

In a time of global climate change, PRASA is proving that public infrastructure can lead the green transition. By investing in renewable energy, we are creating cleaner, safer, and more cost-effective transport services, while supporting South Africa's commitment to reduce emissions under our national energy transition plan. For the people of eThekweni and across South Africa, this means trains that run more reliably, stations that stay operational even during power outages, and a public entity that saves millions of rands from energy costs, that can be redirected toward service improvement and community development.

This project shows that when we combine environmental stewardship with operational innovation, we lay the foundation for a transport system that is both sustainable and people-centered.

Today we also celebrate a milestone that symbolises hope, renewal, and progress — the rollout of Train Set 300, affectionately known as *Isitimela Sabantu*, meaning “The People’s Train.”

Built locally by Gibela in Ekurhuleni, these modern, blue-and-grey X’tropolis Mega trains are redefining the experience of passenger rail travel in South Africa. Reaching Train Set 300 marks the halfway point to our goal of producing 600 locally-manufactured trains, a major achievement in the Rail Modernisation Programme led by PRASA and the Department of Transport.

But beyond the numbers, *Isitimela Sabantu* tells a story of local empowerment. This programme supports black industrialists, stimulates South Africa’s advanced manufacturing sector, and has already created thousands of jobs — many of them for youth and women. Each train that leaves the Gibela plant in Nigel, carries not only passengers but also the skills, livelihoods, and aspirations of South Africans who built it.

For the people of eThekweni, this investment means restored rail services, improved safety, and shorter travel times between communities and workplaces. Reliable, affordable rail access unlocks economic participation for thousands of commuters who depend on public transport every day.

The modernisation of our fleet also signals a decisive shift toward local content and technology transfer. It affirms the government’s industrial policy vision that infrastructure investment must create value here at home, not only through the services it delivers but through the manufacturing ecosystems it sustains.

With every kilometer of track restored and every train returned to service, we are not only reconnecting cities, we are rebuilding confidence, creating opportunity, and delivering on our promise to make public transport the backbone of inclusive growth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we rebuild our rail system, we must also rebuild the communities that depend on it. The Isipingo Mall, is a shining example of how PRASA's property portfolio can drive urban renewal and create new economic hubs that directly benefit local residents.

This development forms part of PRASA's secondary mandate strategy to revitalise key economic nodes and unlock the commercial potential of properties surrounding its rail network. The Centre covers 7 259 square meters of lettable retail area to be utilized by the 45 Shops, Centre Manager Office, Public Ablution facilities, Banks & ATM's, Food Court and 304 parking bays, designed to serve both commuters and the broader community.

During the construction phase, the project created approximately 271 jobs, providing vital income and skills training for artisans, laborers, and contractors from the surrounding areas. This injection of employment helped stimulate local economic activity at a critical time and built a foundation for sustainable livelihoods.

Now, in its operational phase, Isipingo Mall is expected to generate more than 150 permanent jobs in retail, facilities management, and community services. These opportunities are already helping local families secure stable incomes and contribute to the economic vitality of eThekweni.

Importantly, this development embodies PRASA's secondary commercial mandate — to generate revenue through its property assets in a way that benefits communities and supports the financial sustainability of the rail network.

By investing in developments like Isipingo Mall, PRASA demonstrates that public infrastructure can be financially viable, socially impactful, and community-oriented all at once.

None of these achievements would be possible without strong partnerships. The Department of Transport, PRASA, Intersite, our developers, local municipalities, and the private sector have worked together to ensure that these projects deliver real results, including jobs, skills, and economic growth. As a government, we recognise

that sustainable transport infrastructure is not built in isolation. It requires collaboration across all spheres - national, provincial, and local - as well as engagement with business and labour.

The eThekweni community has shown what can be achieved when public investment meets community participation. Each of these projects, from the solar installations to the new trains and the Isipingo Mall, are a direct reflection of the true ethos of South Africa, the spirit of Ubuntu: working together to uplift one another. Through these partnerships, we are laying the tracks for a transport system that does more than move people; it transforms lives.

This October, as we commemorate Transport Month under the theme *“Implementing an integrated, sustainable and safe transport system that promotes inclusive economic growth, job retention and creation, and social development,”* we can say with confidence that this theme is alive in the work we witness today.

The projects we launch in eThekweni are proof that government’s vision is being translated into action and measurable impact. Together, these initiatives tell a powerful story, a story of rebuilding with purpose, investing with integrity, and putting people at the centre of progress.

As we look to the future, our mission remains clear: to deliver a safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable transport system that supports South Africa’s social and economic transformation.

In the months ahead, PRASA will continue to roll out new train sets, expand renewable energy projects across the network, and unlock the value of its properties to strengthen financial sustainability. The Department of Transport will continue to support these efforts, guided by the principle that public transport must be an instrument of equity, opportunity, and dignity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's celebration is not just about what has been built, it is about what we are building together, a modern rail system powered by clean energy, a workforce empowered by local innovation, and communities revitalised through inclusive development.

As we stand here in eThekweni we are reminded that all of these efforts are part of a much larger vision, a vision of a South Africa that moves forward, together.

Let us continue this journey with determination, integrity, and unity of purpose. Let us make transport the driving force of our nation's renewal.

Thank you. Ngiyabonga.