

Metrorail "not ready to open during level 3"

The Gauteng Legislature's Portfolio Committee on Roads and Transport says the opening of rail during level 3 lockdown could spell a public transport catastrophe.



Image credit: Metrorail Western Cape.

The committee said it is was not pleased with the measures presented by the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa's administrator, Bongisizwe Mpondo, on their readiness to receive passengers under level 3 lockdown regulations.

"As the bulk of working class citizens go back to work, trains are expected to be operational effective 1 June 2020. However, plans presented by Prasa are short of a Gauteng province integrated system and could lead to a public transport disaster during level 3," the Committee said.

According to the statement released, it has emerged that Metrorail will only have one line in operation in the Gauteng province.

"This move only addresses the north Gauteng commuters, leaving out all other regions in the province."

Moreover, issues of safety, security and screening measures presented by Mpondo were not reassuring to the committee.

"Some of the doubts were prompted by the fact that Prasa has no indication on average figures of their daily commuters,

therefore, making Prasa's mitigation plans feeble, as they are not informed on any context including that of daily commuters."

According to the Chairperson of the Roads and Transport Committee, Dumisani Dakile, while they understand Prasa is under administration and faces immense challenges, it has to put the passengers' lives first.

"Our responsibility as the committee is to ensure that all public transport in the province is ready to provide service by ensuring there are effective measures in place for the safe travel of commuters.

"Unfortunately, Prasa has not been convincing in their plans that they are ready to rise to the occasion. The committee is expecting a revised presentation that is tangible, informed and reassuring that Prasa is ready to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic in trains," Dakile said.

The Committee requested the MEC of Roads and Transport, Jacob Mamabolo, to convene an urgent meeting with all modes of transport institutions, including Prasa, to consolidate all public transport plans into an integrated plan, ensuring effective transport in the province during level 3 of lockdown.

"The meeting is scheduled to take place this week and the Committee is expecting feedback by the end of the week on the outcome of the meeting."

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