TRANSPORT

Networks that move Zimbabwe forward

Zimbabwe has one of the most developed transport networks in Africa. Much of this was inherited at independence in 1980, but it has been significantly extended since then. Zimbabwe is also in a key geographical position in the region, occupying a strategic role as a transport hub through which much of the region's imports and exports must transit to the ports on the east and west coasts. However, the Zimbabwean transport network is in a deep-seated structural crisis and requires fundamental reconstruction. The rural areas and resettlement areas are the most affected in terms of road networks to link them with main roads and cities.

With the recovery planned for agricultural output and the expected response from new resettlement areas, dramatically increased production of various agricultural products is anticipated. In addition the introduction of sound policies for the mining industry is also expected to lead to a sharp rise in mineral production and exports. These developments, together with the overall recovery of the economy and the resumption of normal coal and liquid fuel supplies, will place an immediate and substantial burden on the transport network.

In the global economy of today, where national growth is often predicated on international trade, transport and communication are critical elements in the process of growth and development. As the national economy becomes more fully integrated, and as Zimbabwe increasingly becomes part of a larger global economy, transportation's role will only become more important. Furthermore, as a land-locked country, Zimbabwe is more dependent on regional and national transport systems to reach ports and markets than many other countries. Transportation is the key to opening up new markets and enabling the quick, economical movement of the people and goods that power the country's economy's growth.

Because of the collapse of the national economy since 1997, the transport grid is very run down and will require considerable investment to get it back into normal operational condition once the required political changes take place. The MDC government will immediately put in place strategies to ensure that Zimbabwe moves to regain its position as a regional leader in the operation and management of transport networks, both road and rail, that link the whole region.

To ensure that transport is underpinned by the principles of safety and responsiveness, transport policies will ensure high standards of health, safety and personal security for all people, including users, workers and operators.

Transport must support both traditional and new forms of production and processes, adapt quickly to the changing international environment, and respond to the different issues facing urban and rural communities. This will require a transport system that is efficient, reliable, affordable, flexible, innovative and resilient.

The Links to Mozambique Ports

It is recognized that these links, using rail, road and pipelines, constitute an essential route to ports on the eastern seaboard. They are therefore vital to the future growth and prosperity of both Zimbabwe and its northern neighbours. The MDC government will initiate talks at the highest level with the government of Mozambique to ensure that these rail, road and pipeline links have sufficient capacity to handle all traffic and to move exports and imports on a cost-effective and secure basis.

The National Transport Investment Agency

The MDC government will set up a investment agency whose responsibility will be to encourage private-sector participation in rail, road and air transport services and to review existing private-sector investment such as that involving the Bulawayo Beitbridge Railways (BBR). While the government will run public transport utilities in rail, road and air services, the agency will ensure that the private sector is encouraged to invest in these critical transport services for the convenience of the travelling public in line with the major policy objective of ensuring a reliable, fast and efficient transport system. The investment agency will report to Parliament.

RAIL TRANSPORT

The objective is to have a professional, fast, reliable and safe railway transport network across the country which facilitates the smooth movement of goods and people. The MDC government will immediately launch a programme for the rehabilitation of the main railway network with the focus on increased train speed, safety and customer satisfaction.

The rail transport system of Zimbabwe forms a critical link in the regional railways system of SADC. Through links with Spoornet of South Africa and Botswana Railways, the system provides connections to Zambia, Namibia, Swaziland, the DRC, Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania and Malawi. With an extensive system of nearly 3,000 kilometres of railway lines covering the whole country and five rail connections to neighbouring countries, rail plays a key role in the movement on a cost-effective basis of some 2.5 million tonnes of traffic a year.

National Railways of Zimbabwe

Currently the National Railways of Zimbabwe has sufficient functional rolling stock to run only six to ten trains a day on the whole system. The South African railways operator, Spoornet, is augmenting this limited capacity. Spoornet provides rolling stock and locomotive power on the Beitbridge to Victoria Falls line. Botswana Railways also helps with the capacity on the line from Bulawayo to Lobatse and then on to South Africa.

On top of these problems, the Centralized Train Control System has collapsed completely, and the railways have been forced to revert to manual and telephone-operated systems that limit line capacity and transit times. Close co-ordination with other modes of transport, especially road, regional rail organizations and transport operators is essential to promote sustainable development in the transport sector. The NRZ faces the challenge of operating high-quality conventional rail systems that extend services to regions underserved by passenger or freight trains and additional trains to established routes. It should also aim at generating enough positive operating cash inflows to help support its investment requirements and eliminate dependence on government subsidies.

To address the challenges of the rehabilitation of the National Railways of Zimbabwe, the MDC government will reconstitute its board with representatives of all major users and selected specialists with appropriate knowledge and experience. It will also open up the rail routes to private operators, recognizing the huge financial investment required by this key transport link.

All railways staff will belong to a National Employment Council, and the board and management will act as the employer, the board taking the lead role. The NEC will be reorganized along the lines set out in the policy on social security.

THE NATIONAL ROAD NETWORK

An immediate task of the MDC government will be to rehabilitate, expand and improve the existing road network. The MDC government will encourage local authorities to construct modern road networks to facilitate and open up potential investment areas as well as to enhance convenience for the travelling public.

The MDC government recognizes road safety as a priority in the quest to build a safe and secure nation based on the effective enforcement of traffic laws, road safety education, better driver training and licensing, and a reduction in incidents of drunken driving.

In this regard, the MDC government will immediately formulate a national road-safety strategic plan to address road-safety problems in a holistic manner, and will be responsible for the introduction of focused road-safety campaigns.

Public Passenger Transport

The MDC government will privatize mass public transporters, ensuring that they are safe, reliable and efficient (metro-bus services). Passengers will be able to buy monthly or annual fare cards for their convenience, while the government will fund concessionary fares for school children, the elderly and the disabled.

The MDC government will immediately set up a public transport service support fund within the National Transport Investment Agency for new owner-driven buses and minibuses. The fund will also set up a programme for the rehabilitation of buses in partnership with coachbuilders and bus operators. The MDC government will also plan and develop a mass-transit system for the major cities in Zimbabwe.

The National Road Authority

The MDC government will retain the National Road Authority to manage the National Road Fund and undertake the following tasks immediately:

- Review the condition of all national roads and make detailed recommendations for their immediate maintenance and reconstruction needs.
- Request all Rural District Councils and urban councils to undertake a similar exercise on roads in their areas and submit budgets to the National Road Authority for consideration.
- Prepare a detailed, audited set of accounts for the Fund, and recommend to the minister any action required on the problems discovered by this process.
- Identify independent experts for appointment to the board of the Fund.
- Review the staffing of the Fund and take appropriate action.
- Make recommendations to government on the levels of funding required for a three-year reconstruction and recovery programme and on how these funds might be sourced.
- Introduce a compulsory third-party insurance scheme.

Funding the National Road Fund

The MDC government will impose a levy on all imports of liquid fuels and oils for the motor industry and direct these funds to the National Road Fund. Local authorities will be permitted to apply for funding from the Insurance Fund to repair damage to road infrastructure arising from accidents.

Private contractors, appointed for this purpose after a competitive-tender process, will conduct all work on national roads. In addition, local authorities will apply to the Fund each year for a grant to undertake roadworks in their area of responsibility.

The Road Fund will require all such authorities to properly account for such funds, and to provide an audit statement supporting these reports within six months of each financial year-end. Local authorities that fail to meet these requirements will be suspended from the grant system until they comply.

Funds will be allocated to local authorities and to road projects based on statistics of road usage collected by reliable means throughout the country. These statistics will be updated annually and be used to justify expenditure and to guide future activities. The ministry will supervise this process.

Cross-border Transport Agreements

As Zimbabwe is a landlocked country, the MDC government will honour existing agreements and continue to negotiate with neighbouring countries in order to facilitate an unimpeded flow of goods and passengers within the region.

Networking Rural and Farming Areas

Roads carry the greatest volume of traffic and are an essential factor in economic development. The MDC government will develop a strategic national road network throughout the country from which feeder roads will radiate to various rural communities. The MDC government, using labour-based road construction methods, will ensure that every rural service centre and all resettlement areas are connected with a good accessible road as soon as possible to facilitate easy movement of both passengers and products throughout the country.

Road Maintenance

Labour-based methods of road construction and maintenance are potentially effective tools for creating employment. The MDC government will set up labour-based road-maintenance programmes by supporting the funding and training of local companies to be contracted to carry out road maintenance and construction, especially of tertiary and access roads in rural areas. Private-sector participation in roads maintenance will be especially encouraged and supported.

Cost-recovery and Road-user Charges

The current level of cost-recovery in the road sector is very low. Cost recovery will be an integral part of the MDC government's strategy to ensure that funds are available for the maintenance of the national road infrastructure. In this regard, the concept of road tolls, being one of the means of cost-recovery, will be pursued in collaboration with the private sector. Currently a road-user charging system is in place for vehicles travelling outside the SADC home countries, and the MDC government will continue to consult with member States to promote the smooth flow of goods and persons within the region.

The ministry will run weighbridges to monitor loads as a key component of carriage-way management and as a source of revenue for government. Tolls on new roads will also be considered.

Vehicle Licence Fees

Local authorities will be permitted to charge a licence fee on all road vehicles using their road systems. These fees will be set by the local authority and will be paid into a specific fund for the purpose of constructing and maintaining their roads.

The MDC government will review the current vehicle-registration system with a view to improving on it, and address the current confusion within the number plates system. The issuing of vehicle and driver's licences and permits will be decentralized to provincial levels. This will continue to be administered by the Vehicle Inspection Department, which will also remain responsible for the assessment of the road-worthiness of vehicles.

Government Vehicle Management and Control

The MDC believes in private ownership and will develop a system that enables public servants to own and maintain their own vehicles.

Importation and Sale of Commercial Vehicles

The heavy-duty vehicle fleet in Zimbabwe is the largest of any country in the region. This growth has been made possible by the provision of low rates of import duty on second-hand vehicles from abroad. These arrangements will be kept in place and, in addition, kits for the assembly of both pick-up trucks and other commercial vehicles will be made duty-free to encourage local manufacture.

AIR TRANSPORT

The Civil Aviation Authority

The MDC government's policy thrust for aviation is to build capacity both in terms of infrastructure and institutional development to ensure safe, cost-effective and efficient air travel. The MDC government will upgrade airports in major towns and cities in line with international standards once air traffic warrants this.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe will be encouraged to:

- Market its infrastructure to stimulate increased utilization so as to generate additional revenue with appropriate cost-recovery measures.
- Put in place a programme to rehabilitate, upgrade and establish airports in key tourist and business areas in Zimbabwe.

- Accelerate the expansion of the air-transport network through a variety of measures, including market liberalization.
- Provide adequate capacity and market access to facilitate the easy movement of domestic and international traffic to and from Zimbabwe. Update all bilateral air-service agreements, taking into account the potential benefits to other sectors of the economy, especially tourism, trade, commerce and investment, to meet the larger national interests.
- Ensure that Harare Airport has excess capacity, given that O. R. Tambo Airport may not be able to handle all the region's traffic for much longer.

Aviation security is facing serious challenges following the September 11, 2001, attacks in USA. The MDC government, in collaboration with other governments, will modernize and upgrade aviation security systems and establish, through additional training, a new aviation security staff to enhance responsiveness.

The CAAZ will also be required to consult all stakeholders – including cargo operators, clearing agents, aircraft operating companies, tourist agencies such as the Zimbabwe Council for Tourism and the Zimbabwe Tourist Authority, as well as major air cargo companies – on future traffic estimates and what is required in terms of investment to meet these demands. This will lead to the development of a three-year rehabilitation and recovery plan, with financial estimates for the consideration of the board and the minister.

Air Zimbabwe

The MDC government recognizes the need to develop tourism and to improve air travel services between the major business centres of the world, including strengthening economic and social ties within Africa.

The national airline has had considerable difficulties in recent years as a result of constant political interference with its management and operations. This, together with the decline and collapse in the economy, has led to a situation where the airline is now unable to service it routes within the region and overseas. As a result of these developments, Air Zimbabwe will have to revisit its strategies, e.g. either to remain an international airline or to become a regional feeder operator within a specific marketing niche.

The MDC government will appoint a Commission of Inquiry into the airline with terms of reference that will require the commission to make recommendations on future policy towards the airline industry.

In particular, the government will seek the views of the commission on, *inter alia*:

- The adoption of an 'open skies' policy.
- The different options available in respect to the future operations of the national airline, including a joint venture with a larger player, the dissolution of the airline altogether, and any other possible arrangements that might strengthen local air transport capacity and safety and improve services and lower costs.