

Maputo

DRIVEN BY its ever-passionate CEO Brenda Horne, the Maputo Corridor Logistics Initiative is continuing to lobby for 24-hour operation at the Lebombo/Ressano Garcia border post which recorded an astounding 71% increase in the number of passengers moving through for the five days leading up to Christmas compared to the previous year.

"This is indeed a wonderful example of successful regional integration following transport infrastructure rehabilitation," says Horne. "And where people move there is economic activity which results in economic growth and job creation."

Border opening hours

06:00 to 24:00 for passengers and 22:00 for the presentation of freight documents.

Mozambique and South Africa have agreed in principle to a 24-hour border operation, with late 2008 or early 2009 the likely implementation dates although this is still to be confirmed. It is however clear from recently-extended operating hours (on September 1, 2006 cargo clearing hours were extended to 22h00 and passengers to 24:00) that there is a willingness on both sides to move towards the 24-hour goal.

Delays, clearance time

The biggest delays relate to the processing of documentation for cargo, and here exporters, importers and agents play an important role in facilitating speedy clearance.

If truckers arrive with cargo and then have to find an agent to handle the clearing process, this can take between three and a half and five and a half hours on the South African side, and up to two and a half hours on the Mozambican side.

If trucks are pre-cleared, the process can take as little as 30 to 45 minutes on the South African side and an hour on the Mozambican side.

If exporters and transporters plan ahead then the EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) process ensures that cargo is cleared within a short space of time. The worst-case scenario, particularly where documentation is incorrectly completed, will result in trucks being delayed for 9 – 24 hours while awaiting clearance.

Advice from the MCLI is to ensure that there is clear communication between exporters and importers and their agents so that documentation is accurately completed.

Adding to the delays is the build-up of trucks arriving during the border's closing times of 24:00 to 6:00. These are only processed after 6:00 the next morning.

Corruption

Whenever there are inefficiencies in a system it is a breeding ground for fraud and corruption, hence the very strong drive from MCLI to make users aware of their roles and responsibilities and their contribution in reporting any corruption to the relevant "hotlines" to ensure this is reduced to a minimum.

What is crucial is that all business role players work with MCLI and the authorities to combat this, rather than be part of corruption in the clearing process.

Smuggling

Once again, criminals will target the weakest link in a chain. Our congested border post poses great challenges to the anti-smuggling teams of both countries to combat both the smuggling of goods and people.

The MCLI believes that with adequate infrastructure and revised procedures under the 24 hour joint one stop border project, efficiencies will better equip officials to detect and fight smuggling.



Challenges

The key challenge is the limited infrastructure and movement space for passengers and freight trucks, which is not separated.

The border post was not designed to carry the volumes of cargo and passenger traffic currently moving through.

The second challenge is one of human resources.

There is a lack of consistency in the processing of documentation in the two customs departments, and the speed of processing seems to depend on the capacity of staff on shift at the time.

The SAD500 is in use on the South African side of the border, but not yet on the Mozambique side, which still means two sets of documentation.

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A third challenge relates to driver passports – truck drivers are required to stop at the frontier to have their passports processed by the two immigration departments. This adds to their border crossing time with the trucks parked at the frontier further clogging up the system and making it unsafe for passengers.

"It's a very clear indication that our one stop border post where passengers and freight will be separated is crucial," says the MCLI.



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Progress

The implementation of the 24-hour joint one-stop border post in 2009 will go a long way towards addressing both the infrastructure, processing and congestion constraints.

The Lebombo/Ressano Garcia one-stop border post project has a budget of R600 million which will include separate facilities for processing passenger, rail and commercial cargo traffic, with cargo traffic to be processed at a site four kilometres inside the Mozambique border known as KM4.

This site will be serviced by a dedicated and secure road connecting the border post with KM4 and will have the relevant border authorities from South Africa and Mozambique on hand to ensure that processing of documentation is efficient and user-friendly.

The imports for Mozambique will be fully cleared and ready for distribution into Mozambique, which will do away with the present inefficiencies experienced at FRIGO.

Indications are that tenders for the construction will go out during early 2008 with targeted completion during 2009. There is a clear understanding that all has to be operational in time for the 2010 Soccer World Cup.