

Electronic border clearance needs advance notification

Border post must be advised an hour prior to the arrival of a truck

BY Liesl Venter

Congestion, clearing issues and even parking are just some of the problems the South African Revenue Service (Sars) is hoping to address with the re-writing of South Africa's customs legislation.

The new legislation will allow for e-clearing that will need to be done prior to arrival at any of the border posts – a move welcomed by freight forwarders and transporters alike as huge delays at border posts become all too familiar.

“One of the major stumbling blocks we have recently identified is that original certificates of origin for SADC transit need to be presented at the border posts, knocking out the submission of electronic data and pre-

clearance,” says Gavin Kelly, spokesman for the Road Freight Association, which has been working closely with Sars on the new legislation.

“The process of clearing vehicles and immigration-related tasks is the major delay at any border post. If pre-clearing were done it would immediately sort out the congestion issues and should make free flow possible. The immigration process is a hindrance, as currently drivers have to park their vehicles and go to an office. Further problems are created with vehicles scans and other means of checking cargo – all slowing down the movement.”

The RFA has proposed to Sars that to streamline and speed up cross border movement cargo carriers must give advance notice to



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customs authorities of the arrival of cargo at border posts. These notices must be submitted electronically at least an hour prior to the arrival of a truck at any border post.

Sars for the most part is in agreement and believes that the new updated

legislation will improve the situation.

But, says Kelly, there are various practical issues that have been raised that are not necessarily in the public domain. “The bottom line though is that through a pre-clearance process, the removal of unaccredited

clearing agents (in other words agents who cannot submit electronically and do not operate a real 24 hour a day service for clearing) and a dedicated process to move qualifying vehicles through the border post, the situation will improve dramatically.”