

THE CITY OF TSHWANE

TSHWANE ON THE MOVE



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The City of Tshwane is fast-tracking a new public transport policy aimed at social transformation as much as traffic decongestion

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A city grows up over decades, an expression of the society that creates it. As society changes, the city becomes a repository of its own past, reflecting layers of its history. So Rome is a modern capital and at the same time a museum of a past civilisation. Not ideal for cars, but they live with it! But some of South Africa's urban legacy is not so worthy of preservation, and they don't need to live with it.

A case in point is that the major conurbations are still largely laid out along pre-1994 lines, when the major centres of employment were situated downtown in what is called the Central Business District (CBD), with the middle class mainly white population in conveniently placed suburbs. The majority of the workers had to live in townships at arm's length, and well outside of the 'better' parts of the city.

South Africa's transformation took place a mere 20 years ago, as we are painfully reminded in the immediate aftermath of the death of its architect Nelson Mandela. Though progress has been made it has been neither practicable nor affordable to rebuild the cities from scratch and a number of legacy problems mean that too many of the previously disadvantaged remain disadvantaged.

On top of the congestion that rising GDP has delivered, as it has everywhere, too many of the working population have to make a long and difficult journey to and from their place of work.

The City of Tshwane is one of the worst affected. It was formed in 2000 from the amalgamation of 13 local councils including



amongst others Pretoria, Centurion and Ga-Rankuwa. Its population today stands at about 2.9 million compared to 2001 when it was 2.1 million.

In 2011, the City of Tshwane announced that it would develop an Integrated Rapid Public Transport (IRTPN) through the provision of a high quality and affordable public transport system. The plan focuses on high-frequency corridors where passengers are transported on a dedicated lane where public transport should enjoy priority over private transport. The plan will also provide Tshwane with a permanent and recognisable public transport framework consisting of radial and circular routes. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was identified as the appropriate mode of transport to lead the transformation of public transport in the city.

The target market for A Re Yeng is everyone living in the City of Tshwane, and those visiting too. The present transport options are not integrated, says A Re Yeng's Executive Project Leader (EPL) Lungile Madlala. "There is a government subsidised bus system but in the City of Tshwane there are only two subsidised operators, serving limited routes." For the rest, she says, people rely on a plethora of minibus operators. There is no integration: "We need to integrate all modes of transport

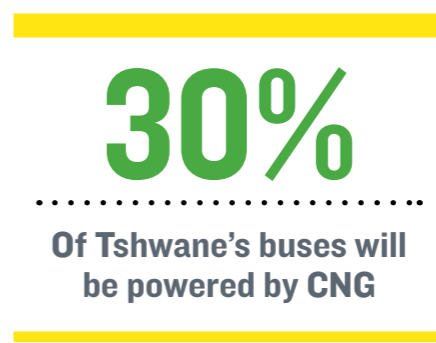


Signing the MOU: City of Tshwane's Mayor, Cllr Kgosientso Ramokgopa (centre) with representatives of Tshwane Regional Taxi Council

including rail, with universal access so you don't have to walk far from your house to link with a service that will take you where you need to go."

Ms Madlala and her team visited cities all over the world before concluding that South America had the closest model to South Africa's, to use as a benchmark for Tshwane's own BRT. Over the next three years the city is expecting to spend R3.6

billion implementing the new system. This represents the cost of building new sections of bus lanes, stations and depots, around 154 new vehicles, and supporting infrastructure such as the intelligent transport management system, CCV cameras, and the upgrading of the entire traffic light system that will give priority to BRT buses. In line with Tshwane's Sustainable Energy and Climate Change (SEED) programme all the buses procured will conform to the highest emissions standard Euro 4, and 30 percent of them will be powered by Compressed Natural Gas (CNG).



Though providing the outlying townships with affordable and reliable transport, the system is designed with all sections of society in mind, she emphasises. A key benefit will be to provide car owners with a realistic alternative, reducing inner city congestion. Public transport will take priority, she promises, with non-motorised transport options facilitated by providing cycle tracks and walkways designed around the access points to the system.

So what will happen to the many private bus and taxi operators once the A Re Yeng becomes operational? Far from losing their

“WE NEED TO INTEGRATE ALL MODES OF TRANSPORT INCLUDING RAIL, WITH UNIVERSAL ACCESS”

livelihood, they will be brought into the system, empowered and given a boost. The industry has survived without government subsidies: now it has new opportunities. When the city and the Greater Tshwane Regional Taxi Council (GTRTC) and Transport Operators Peace Initiators Conglomerated Associations (TOPICA) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in June the chairman of GTRTC Mr Abner Tsebe gave his full support, saying: “The mayor wants to see billionaires created out of this project. We can actually own and run the BRT buses ourselves if we work together and are united.” It will be a bit like a co-operative, says Lungile Madlala: “They will come in and have shares in the

Bus Operating Company. That way they will all have assets in a new business that is more economically viable.”

Clearly the present private operators will have to commit or leave the business, taking a payoff from the operating company – competition on the A Re Yeng routes would not fit the new business model. However a high level of buy-in is expected. Upskilling, training, a regular income and benefits are among the many new rights that the scheme will bring to its operators.

As well as stimulating existing employment opportunities BRT will generate approximately 12,000 new jobs including those related to construction.

“FORMER TAXI AND BUS OPERATORS WILL ALL HAVE ASSETS IN A NEW BUSINESS THAT IS MORE ECONOMICALLY VIABLE”

The first phase of construction is already in full swing, with some sections of road and one station building already completed at Arcadia Street, Hatfield. This inception phase, stretching seven kilometres from Nana Sita Street (formerly Skinner Street) in the CBD to the suburb of Hatfield, will be complete and operational in 2014, says

Madlala. “Then by the end of 2015 we will be working on a bigger scheme that will run from Rainbow Junction (Wonderboom Station), which is a new urban core to the north of the city, to the CBD. In 2016 we plan to link with the Menlyn Node, which is another major development project.”

The A Re Yeng system is far more than merely a transport project, Lungile Madlala emphasises. It will contribute significantly to building a national democratic society. Reduced travel times between home, work, retail and social destinations and improvements in traffic congestion and road safety are just a start. “It will stimulate areas that are quite depressed. We will encourage development in the region of the stations, and these areas will be kept safe and secure. We want disabled people, single women, mothers and children all to feel safe at all times,” she says. The fact that CCTV cameras will monitor the entire system should make people feel more confident, and a reduction in crime will certainly be another side effect of A Re Yeng. **BE**



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