



Wes-Kaapse Provinsiale Parlement Western Cape Provincial Parliament IPalamente yePhondo leNtshona Koloni

Ref Number: 11/4/1/2/7

Report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Public Works on its oversight visit to the George Integrated Transport Network (Go-George) on Monday, 24 May 2021 as follows:

Delegation

The delegation consisted of the following Members:

Mitchell, D (Chairperson and leader of the delegation)
America, D (Chairperson) (DA)
Van der Westhuizen, AP (DA)
Mvimbi, LL (ANC)
Herron, B (GOOD)

The Procedural Officer, Mr J Coetzee, accompanied the delegation.

1. Introduction and background

Section 114 (2)(b)(i) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, mandates provincial legislatures to provide for mechanisms to maintain oversight over the Provincial Executive Authority in the province. Flowing from a resolution of the Standing Committee on Transport and Public Works the Committee undertook an oversight visit to the George Integrated Public Transport Network (GIPTN) also referred as the Go-George Project.

Go-George is a scheduled public bus service in the City of George, aiming to provide a first-class public transport service that is reliable, affordable, safe, convenient, accessible, and that contributes to a better quality of life for all.

The GIPTN focused on full inclusion and transformation of the local minibus taxi industry in George, with a Vehicle Operating Company (VOC) wholly owned and operated by local operators to deliver the new scheduled bus service in terms of a contract.

Through an inter-governmental initiative between the Municipality of George, Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works, National Department of Transport and the local taxi and bus operators from the George area this project came about and is funded through the Western Cape Public Transport Operations Grant as well as the national government through the Public Transport Network Grant.

The Go George bus service celebrated six years of service to the George community in December 2020.

2. Overview of the visit

The Committee visited the Go-George depot and was taken on a tour by the Director of Go-George after which the Committee was briefed by the Directors of George Link (PTY) Ltd and the Department of Transport and Public Works.

3. Key issues discussed

The project commenced during 2007 and was initially initiated by the Western Cape Government and the Municipality of George later joined as a partner. There were four stakeholders involved which were identified as affected parties by Government i.e. Uncedo, George Huurmotor Vereniging (GHV), George Taxi Owners' Front (GTOF) and Louis Bus services.

The actual negotiation process started in 2011 during which all aspects regarding the long term contract (12 years) were negotiated and during this period the company George Link (Pty) Ltd was formed. Some of the aspects included compensation, formation of the company, bus ownership, funding of pre-operational cost, contract rates, service to be operated including phased rollout, training of staff and the presence of full time advisors etc.

The local taxi and bus operators with valid operating licenses were consulted on the design and development of the project right from the start. Numerous public engagements were held and all persons employed in the industry were called upon to register on an Affected Persons Register. Shareholders of the VOC called George link comprises 100% of the local taxi and bus operating licence holders.

The following three options were presented to those affected within the industry:

Option one (buy in): Government compensates the operator for the relinquished license(s) and the operator will become a shareholder and possibly an employee within the new transport company;

Option two (buy out): Government compensates the operator for the relinquished license(s) and the operator will not become a shareholder but may still be employed in the new transport company; and

Option three: Do nothing.

A total number of 233 operators participated with 495 licenses affected. There were 219 buy-ins (option one) and 276 buy-outs (option two). The operating license determined the number of shares in the company. If someone had one operating license they were entitled to one share and if someone had ten operating licenses they would be entitled to ten shares.

If taxi operators did not operate as such, their licences were put in safekeeping and all compensation was paid on a sliding scale for both buy in and buy out options. No transfer of permits were allowed and operators had to sign a compensation agreement. The compensation only happened after the relinquishing of the operating license and rollout in an area.

For the first two years following the signature date of the Operator Agreement, George Link only considered persons for employment that were listed on the Affected Persons register.

With municipal consent, they could employ persons that were not on the register. There are currently 267 permanent bus drivers, five persons employed in the Finance Department, five in the Human Resources Department and 80 in the Operational Department and continual skills development and training is provided.

The fleet of busses is owned by the municipality who is responsible for the maintenance, insurance and passenger liability. The contract makes provision for the takeover of the buses after its useful life and any additional or replacement buses needed after a certain period must be purchased by the VOC, funded through a negotiated rate to be paid for by Government.

The successful implementation of Phases 1, 2, 3, and 4B has allowed the Go George bus service to transport more than 60% of George residents and it covers approximately 87% of the George urban area. The service currently transports 9,000 passengers per day through a scheduled, reliable and affordable service. The service is expected to roll-out to the additional areas around George to further expand the network.

Despite challenges with rolling out parts of the phase 4A service, the GIPTN is committed to ensuring the successful roll-out of the remaining Phases. With the successful roll-out of Phase 4B completed the roll-out to Thembalethu is the next critical milestone towards achieving an integrated transport network for the people of George.

The planning for Phase 4A roll-out has been progressing and the GIPTN Team is working through the scenarios that will allow for a safe and sustainable implementation of Phase 4A.

A Phase 4A roll-out Framework Memorandum has been tabled and the recommendations have been supported and signed-off by the Accounting Officers.

4. Concerns

It was highlighted that there are still a number of illegal taxis on the GIPTN route and a number of attacks on the busses were aimed at the bus drivers which could have very bad consequences if a driver is injured.

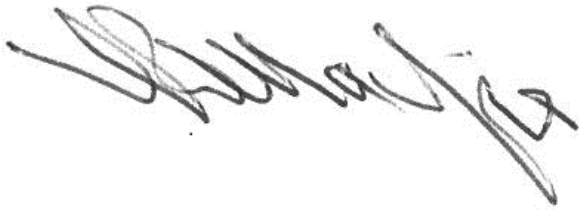
The Provincial Traffic Police is more visible but they are not as prominent in the townships. When they are in the townships they remove the illegal taxis from the road with assistance from the South African Police Service.

5. Resolution

The Committee RESOLVED that it would monitor the roll-out of Phase 4A as well as the operations of GIPTN on a regular basis.

6. Acknowledgements

The Chairperson thanked the Department, the George Municipality and the Directors of George Link for availing themselves to address the committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Mackenzie', written in a cursive style.

MR R MACKENZIE (MPP)

CHAIRPERSON: STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC WORKS

DATE: 24 August 2021