

## Taxi drivers to operate IPTS buses

The Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality has clinched an operating deal that will see taxi drivers from the northern areas run the city's bus system along the Cleary Park route.



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The taxi drivers will also drive the buses themselves and provide feeder taxis.

The deal with the two taxi associations under the Spectrum Alert banner, signed on Wednesday, brings the metro one step closer to launching the Integrated Public Transport System (IPTS) next month.

This was said by IPTS acting project manager Lutando Mabhoza, who presented the vehicle operating agreement to the transport standing committee yesterday.

The document must still be signed by the city manager and adopted in council before it is submitted to the transport department for its endorsement.



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The city has struggled to get the project off the ground.

"This is a milestone...we are taking this a step higher," Mabhoza said.

"If we can get the city manager on board then we will see the buses on the road in October.

"This is good news for the buses that have been standing there for a while now and the ball is, literally, in the city's hands to make sure that this gets signed."

The Cleary Park IPTS route will be run by Spectrum Alert, with the taxi drivers driving the buses and operating the bus system.

Mabhoza said the agreement followed months of robust negotiations between the city, the Northern Areas Taxi Operators' Association (Natoa) and the Algoa Taxi Association (ATO).

## Training from Volvo

He said the taxi drivers would get training from Volvo on how to operate the buses.

Spectrum Alert is expected to bring to the table 100 taxis that will feed the city's 25 buses.

It is also expected to remove about 100 taxis that operate along the Cleary Park route to make way for the buses.

"We are ready and the industry is even more ready. If we don't take this forward we will be delaying them," Mabhoza said.

"If this is signed by the city manager, [Spectrum Alert] can start recruiting their [chief executives]."

Natoa chairman and Spectrum Alert director Chris King said they had decided to sign the agreement following consultations with their lawyers.

"It has been a very bumpy road," King said.



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"There have been challenges but, on the advice of our lawyers, we [concluded] that the document was ready to be signed.

"We hope the implementation phase will not be that difficult.

"The taxi industry is actually looking forward to the IPTS because it is for our and our community's own benefit."

Algoa Taxi Association chairman and Spectrum Alert director Phillip Arends said they were excited about the deal but needed to consult with the rest of the shareholders.

"People on the ground are anxious and can't wait to get this going " our people want and need it more than ever," Arends said.

The committee members agreed to ask the mayoral committee to get city manager Johann Mettler to sign the agreement on

behalf of the city.

DA councillor Kabelo Mogatosi said the deal would help the city rectify apartheid spatial planning.

"The IPTS is not just about taxis and buses," Mogatosi said.

"When we started the shuttle services at NMU, it was because students had to wake up at 4am to catch a taxi to go to campus because of apartheid spatial planning " this will rectify that."

*Source: Herald*

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