

Cosatu, Metrorail to address transport problems

CAPE TOWN: Metrorail and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) in the Western Cape committed on Tuesday, 3 April 2012, to working together to solve the problems bedevilling public transport in the city.

This followed negotiations between the two parties last week, which saw a fare increase of 13% for monthly ticket holders, down from the 27% first announced by Metrorail.

The cost of weekly and daily tickets will still be increased by 21%.

With prices of electricity, fuel and other commodities rising sharply, the proposed fare increase would have had a "devastating effect" on workers, Cosatu provincial secretary Tony Ehrenreich said yesterday.

Glitches in implementing the reduction caused disruptions when commuters were buying their tickets on Monday morning, but Metrorail has undertaken to refund those who paid more than they ought to have done for the tickets.

Metrorail has also given a further discount to monthly ticket holders, which will see them paying only 6% more for the next three months.

A special dispensation had also been agreed for senior citizens, students and the unemployed workers.

Mr Ehrenreich said the "landmark" agreement would mean there would be increased community involvement in reporting cable theft, which has caused repeated and severe disruptions to commuter rail transport as well as vandalism on trains.

"It has set the scene for a completely different public transport system," he said, adding that it was the first time Cosatu and Metrorail had reached such a "comprehensive" agreement.

"We are taking responsibility for the rail system as a whole, so that there is a comprehensive basket of measures that addresses all the problems," Mr Ehrenreich said.

"In addition to this we will be talking with Metrorail about how we can spread the peak times of travel so that it is not as crowded on the trains.

"Some workplaces will start half an hour or an hour later, so that everyone does not need to be on trains at the same time."

Still in dispute, however, is Metrorail's plan to consolidate ticket zones, which the federation believes will result in higher fares for its members in many areas.

The parties have agreed that this issue will be negotiated at the National Economic Development and Labour Council over the next three months.

Source: Business Day

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